UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

POPULAR THEATRE, EDUCATION, AND INNER CITY YOUTH

BY

JOE CLOUTIER ©

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **POPULAR THEATRE, EDUCATION, AND INNER CITY YOUTH** submitted by **JOE CLOUTIER** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in International / Intercultural Education.

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DEDICATION

To the members of the Downtown Group
who made this study possible

ABSTRACT

This narrative study employs the pedagogy of popular theatre to engage in a long-term participatory action research project with a small group of Edmonton's former street youth. The researcher spent over seven years facilitating popular theatre programs in Edmonton's inner city. Through the use of popular theatre, the youth in this study were able to understand and take self-empowering steps to transform lives characterized by a lack of formal education, homelessness, substance abuse, physical violence, and a strong undercurrent of structural violence.

Many inner city, Metis, and First Nations youth face a reality unknown to the average child. Through the use of popular theatre, the youth in this study were able to identify issues that blocked their development. But awareness was not enough. The youth also struggled to identify and use the tools that they needed for their development. Through this six year process, some of the youth have moved from living life on Edmonton's inner city streets to taking part in a weekly popular theatre program and then, at their request, creating a series of plays that explored the issues and realities of their lives.

The plays focused on problems such as substance abuse, family violence, and racism. After coming to terms with many critical issues that dominated their lives, through the use of the popular theatre process, most of the youth began to take responsibility for and give direction to their lives. Over the length of this project, adaptive behaviours such as substance abuse, violence, and other values of a street culture were shaved away. Through the popular theatre process, the youth entered into a world based on the values of trust, respect, cooperation, and non-

violence. After the first play was created, the participants in this study wanted to perform their plays for, and enter into discussion with, the greater community. This study was grounded in hope. It has illuminated the strength, courage, and resiliency of a small group of young people and showed that the youth lived in a world dominated by structural violence and the forces of reproduction. The study has also shown that these forces, while all-pervasive and powerful can be overcome.

Many of the youth continue the struggle on a daily basis. It is that struggle, their new-found confidence, and a degree of *conscientization* that prompted several of the participants to return to school. After an unsuccessful attempt in the traditional school setting the youth requested that this project be expanded to include a high school as part of its' programming. This development shifted the project into another phase, that of providing the participants and a growing number of inner city youth with a high school education.

The youth in this study have used popular theatre to engage in critical social analysis of their reality and identify their own developmental needs. Through the collective long-term nature of the project the youth developed a sense of ownership which empowered them to create a supportive community among themselves. The ongoing relationships created in this project, and the growing degree of *conscientization* realized by some of the youth underscores the value of and need for long-term popular theatre projects and education programs that are sensitive to their needs.

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I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the many people that made this study possible: to my supervisor Dr. S.H. Toh for his intellectual guidance and his ability to keep me on track; to Professor Jan Selman for her years of support, and the sharing of her experience; to Professor David Barnet for his contribution to popular theatre; to Dr. Terry Carson for the action research courses that got my research proposal off the ground; to Dr. Peggy Wilson for her helpful comments and suggestions and for supporting this research; and to Dr. Alan Filewod, the external examiner, for his thought provoking comments.

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The contribution from Inner City's staff should not be forgotten. Alexina Dalgetty deserves special mention for her dedication and commitment to the project over many years. And Inner City's Board of Directors should not go unnoticed. The Board meets time several times a year and gives freely of their time. Without the Board there would not be an organizational framework to carry the project from year to year.

Without Inner City's Board of Directors we would not have been in a position to receive financial support from Edmonton's funding community. The Alberta Alcohol And Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC) got us off the ground. The Clifford E. Lee Foundation provided important support throughout the project. The Edmonton Community Foundation gave us a big boost when we needed it. The City of Edmonton's Family and Community Support Services have provided us with core funding for several years. The Wild Rose Foundation provided generous support when we were faltering. The University of Alberta's Senate, through the Emil Skarin Fund, provided us with financial support on two separate occasions. The Flora Trust made some of our tours possible and provided important support for the Drama House. The McCauley Boys' and Girls' Club shared their resources with us for several years. The Boyle Street Community League provided us with a

location for Inner City High School, and space for drama meetings and popular theatre performances. The Northern Alberta Variety Club have provided us with transportation, a brand new Ford van every year since 1992. And finally, thanks to Edmonton Catholic Schools for supporting the Education component of our programming.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I came to this project with a sense of solidarity. Having spent my youth on the streets of inner city Toronto, I felt a close connection to the young people in Edmonton's inner city. The location and events of this project are particular to their time and space; but their tones, textures, and psychological pressures resonate with the memories of my youth.

The tones and textures of poverty create, for many people, a psychology that is characterized by poor self-esteem, lack of confidence, and feelings of powerlessness. Marilyn and Lorne, two of the young people involved in this project, put it this way. Marilyn said, "I never thought I could do anything right. I thought I was a failure at everything and could do nothing at all" (Goldblat & Howarth, 1990:22). Lorne, at a recent workshop, commented, "I used to walk around with my head hung low, thinking I was no good" (personal communication, August 18, 1994). Marilyn's and Lorne's comments ring true with memories from my youth. They illustrate the sense of powerlessness that often accompanies poverty and marginalization.

Poverty and marginalization are more than words or concepts for many inner city youth. They form part of a lived reality, the depths of which resist academic understanding. How these issues impact the lives and shape the actions of many inner city youth will be revealed in the course of this study. This research project is a long-term popular theatre-based exploration of the social, economic, and political issues facing many inner city youth as they struggle to come to terms with an often hostile environment. My description and interpretation of these issues and the young people's response to them will form the content of the study. The data that informs it will be drawn, over an extended period of time, from the day-to-day experiences of several inner city youth.

Personal Relationship To The Project

The development of this project and my relationship to it are influenced by my experiences as a youth and underpinned by a sense of solidarity with inner city youth. I spent many youthful years on the streets of inner city Toronto. Street gangs, violence, petty crimes, lack of a formal education, and drug and alcohol abuse were part of my experiences during those years and are characteristic of youth involved in street culture. As I sort through the editing process that memories grow out of, I can identify a definite period of resistance to the norms and values of the dominant culture, a culture that seemed out of my reach.

At about age 13, the contradictions between the social standing and material possessions of my family and other more affluent families became more apparent to me. This gap was reinforced through the media and the growing role of television. My father had an old car; other fathers had new cars. To solve that contradiction, I stole newer cars. That gave me status among my friends and the knowledge that I could get a new car when and if I wanted one.

Being tough was important. If you were tough you had power. This sense of power can mask feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. Gaining power in this way invites contact with the law. The more you strive for a false sense of power, the more powerless you become. The law strikes back with brutality, harassment, and jail. Thus begins the cycle of resistance, jail, and life on the margins of society.

The experiences of these early years influenced my work with Edmonton's inner city youth. My familiarity with many of the personal and social issues of the inner city environment became obvious to some of the young people as our work progressed. This I felt deepened our solidarity which in turn allowed me to be accepted as a community member in addition to my role as group facilitator.

Education, I knew, could break the destructive cycle of resistance, jail, and life on the margins of society. I left school at age 15 with a Grade 8 education. Despite my lack of a formal education, I harboured a secret desire to attend university. Several dead- end jobs, unemployment, and some flirtations with various enterprises (legal and illegal) did not kill my long-held desire to attend university.

Years later in Edmonton, my association with inner city youth took on a more constructive character. In 1981 I became a volunteer youth worker in Edmonton's inner city. In 1983, after some upgrading, I was able to register in university as a late 30s mature student. As I approached graduation with a B.Ed., my desire to teach in an inner city school collided with the harsh realities of the inner city environment. One incident from that period sticks out as being particularly significant. The setting is an Edmonton inner city elementary school.

Conversation In an Inner City Classroom

As a student teacher and in my first practicum, I was looking forward to time in the school. My role in this practicum was to observe, to experience life in the classroom. The teacher of this Grade 5 class managed the arithmetic lesson in what I thought was an unusual but at the same time familiar way. She sat at her desk and when students had a question, they were directed to bring their work up to her. This routine was broken by the teacher's disciplinary comments shouted at students. One group of three students were not on task during most of the period. The teacher asked the students to stay in for recess and assigned me to guard duty. I knew the three students from my volunteer work in the community. As we sat out recess, a conversation developed. The students discussed their home life. One of the students said, "My sister got stabbed. This guy, he ran right into our house and in my sister's room. He stabbed her. She came running out. There was blood all over." After some sympathetic nods, another student added, "My uncle, he sits in the basement with his friends. They put wine into needles and stick it in their arm. They get drunk faster that way. When there's no wine, they scrape the powder off the basement walls and mix it with water."

How, I wondered, could these students stay on task, dutifully completing their arithmetic lessons, with experiences such as these fresh in their minds? What was the use of having a teacher in the classroom who might as well have been living on a different planet than the students she was teaching? The problems of many inner city youth were not, and in my opinion never would be, addressed in this way. There had to be another way. I continued with my studies and community work while these thoughts simmered in my mind. I registered in a summer drama course at the University of Alberta. The course, I hoped, would cure my shyness. Some progress was made in that direction, but more importantly I recognized the potential of drama for personal and social change. I was inspired in that drama class to begin a project in the inner city. I hoped that the use of drama with inner city youth would build self-esteem and provide an outlet for the creative expression of difficult personal and social issues.

Statement of the Problem

At this point I decided that my focus was best placed on community work and the rigours of a graduate program rather than on an institutionally based teaching career. Many of the problems faced by Edmonton's inner city youth were familiar to me. However, the presence of so many aboriginal people in desperate social circumstances was not. In my youth, there were not the high numbers of aboriginal people involved with Toronto street life as there are in Edmonton.

Edmonton's central Alberta location makes it one of the largest urban centres in the north. There are several First Nation reserves in the immediate area, and Edmonton is a popular destination for aboriginal people, drawn from the reserves to the urban centre. Consequently, there are large numbers of aboriginal youth on the streets of Edmonton's inner city. The nature of street culture invites contact with the police. For example, native people (young and old) account for 5 per cent of Alberta's population (York, 1990), yet in 1989 native youth accounted for 34.9 per cent of the young offenders (12-17) admitted to Alberta young offender facilities (Cawsey, 1991). Thirty-seven per cent of all native youth end their academic careers in junior high school. This compares with 17 per cent for the non-native population (Hagey, Larocque, & McBride, 1989). The Cawsey Task Force found that Aboriginal youth are faced with an uphill battle from the start. This includes a lack of educational opportunities, a lack of employment opportunities, poor living conditions, problems of substance abuse, and historically based problems of cultural identity (Cawsey, 1991). At this time (1986), I was unaware of the depths of this reality.

Problems of substance abuse are often associated with the lack of a formal education. The general response to this issue is to provide the abuser with some form of treatment. These problems are often combined with chronic unemployment which, in turn, leads to dependency on the social welfare net. The problem of school dropouts is, according to the media, reaching epidemic proportions. The traditional response to this difficult problem is to provide students identified as being at risk of dropping out of school with tutoring and other forms of remedial help. Youth crime grows out of this cycle and is traditionally addressed by housing young offenders in detention centers. The result is an unacceptable loss of human potential, the costs of which are borne by all members of the community.

These responses are inadequate. They treat symptoms rather than explore root causes. This study is based on alternative responses to these difficult social problems. In this project, inner city youth use popular theatre as a form of participatory research in their struggle to transcend the culture of street life. The youth, normally silenced by destructive social conditions, use popular theatre to explore the underlying causes of the events that define their world. In this context, the research becomes participatory and empowering (Lambert, 1982; Lather, 1986). The research is committed to creating an environment whereby inner city youth become empowered to liberate themselves from a culture that is characterized by poverty, violence, and various forms of abuse. This is a long-term process that can lead to action and change (Burgi Atongi, 1992). These are issues that are important to teachers, administrators, teacher educators, youth workers, social workers, and anyone interested in a just and humane approach to a difficult social issue. Through the work of the Inner City Drama Association, I have been able to maintain the long-term commitment that this project has required.

Inner City Drama

In 1986 I initiated and co-developed the Inner City Drama Association (ICDA). My intent was to use the power of drama to address developmental issues facing inner city youth. To this end, ICDA began offering drama programs to inner city children in 1986. In 1987 a children's program was offered in a second location. The power and potential of drama as a developmental tool in the children's programs was acknowledged by community members and representatives of community agencies such as Edmonton's McCauley Boys' and Girls' Club and Alex Taylor Community School.

The next step in the evolution of this project was to develop programs for older youth. In 1988, popular theatre-based drama programs were developed with youth 13 years and older. As these programs developed, the potential of drama and more specifically of popular theatre to provide inner city youth with tools to explore aspects of their social reality, as well as the implications and consequences of their actions, was recognized by community agencies such as the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC) and the Edmonton Young Offenders Centre (EYOC).

AADAC's recognition involved substantial financial support over a 3 year period and the funding of an independent study entitled *The How and Why of the Inner City Drama Association* (1990, Goldblatt & Horwarth). AADAC's report included interviews with some of the young people in ICDA groups and with group facilitators, an outline of the philosophy and methodology that underpinned the programs, and comments on the perceived value of (ICDA) popular theatre performances by group members. In 1989 the Downtown Group wanted to explore their social reality in more depth and take the resulting plays to the greater community. As I began to work more closely with this group, I discovered that many of them did not have a permanent place to live.

In 1990, ICDA rented a large house in Edmonton's city core. The house provided office space for ICDA and a safe place for homeless youth to stay on a part-time or permanent basis In 1991, older youth began learning to become facilitators in programs with younger children. With a degree of stability in their lives, some of the youth chose to return to school. To facilitate this process ICDA established a tutoring program in the house/office. Two months later, the youth began to drop out of school again. They asked if they could study full time with ICDA.

In 1993, a provincially accredited independent high school was incorporated into the project. In 1994, Inner City Drama Association's name was changed to the

Inner City Youth Development Association (Inner City). The original name no longer reflected the nature of Inner City's programming. The focus of Inner City's work is now with youth between the ages of 15 and 22. It is youth from this age group--largely of Aboriginal or Métis descent--that will provide most of the data for this study. Throughout this dissertation, I will use the terms *Aboriginal youth* and *Native youth* to identify Canada's First Nation and Métis people.

The humanity and reality of many inner city youth, both native and non-native, is often hidden under labels such as *street kids*, *youth at risk*, or *school drop outs*. This research looks beyond the labels and stereotypes, allowing the young people's humanity to shine through.

Research Methodology

Popular theatre theory and practice form the core of Inner City programming. Through the use of popular theatre, the youth participate in their own research. They are not objects of curiosity to be studied by the researcher. They become masters of inquiry into the underlying causes of events in their world (Freire,1987; Hall, 1993). This project, like many participatory research projects, involves the youth in the collective search for responses to difficult social problems (Castellano, 1986; Mtonga, 1986; Park, 1993). The search takes place through popular theatre programs and exercises. Popular theatre methodology has much in common with participatory research. It is a form of theatre in which the community or popular theatre group is directly involved in identifying and acting out situations from their lives (Burgi Atongi, 1992; Kidd,1979). Participatory research provides a way for groups who are often oppressed or marginalized to become researchers and active participants in the search for responses to issues that they themselves have identified as being important (Castellano, 1986; Gavanta, 1993; Hall, 1993).

In the weekly meetings of Inner City Drama groups, situations and events from the young people's lives are put into scenes and analyzed. The analysis is done by the youth and is based on their personal insights, not on the forced analysis of an outside facilitator. This form of popular theatre is "produced by and for the people without spectators" (Lambert, 1982, p. 243). The Inner City process takes another step when the youth decide that they would like to make other community members aware of the issues that they are dealing with and involve other community members in the search for solutions. This takes place through popular theatre performances with Inner City's performing group. A narrative interpretation of these events and the young people's response to them will form the content of this project.

Members of the group are responsible for most of the data that informs this project. The group performs at various community venues such as the Edmonton Young Offenders Centre, Nechi/Poundmaker Institute, youth conferences, Aboriginal conferences, and at the University of Alberta, Faculty of Education. Each performance is followed by a discussion period in which the audience and actors discuss issues that are raised in the play. When the audience and actors share aspects of the reality that is portrayed on the stage the open-ended discussion of the play and the issues that it raises become part of the learning process (Epskamp, 1989; Selman, 1987).

The research process is interpretive in the sense that it reveals aspects of the participants' views of reality. This is a narrative project that uses the text to display rather than analyze the data (Lather, 1992). In this study the knowledge of the researcher is not seen as being superior in the sense that the researcher *knows best* and can stand in judgement of the participants. Nor does this researcher hold that knowledge or observation can be value free (Freire, 1993; Kuhn, 1962; Lather, 1992; Saltz, 1992). Indeed, the narrative is written with the knowledge that our personal reality filters what we see. Our view of the world is created from the particular set of experiences that have been part of our development. These experiences profoundly affect the way in which we see the world (Brydon-Miller; Park, Hall, & Jackson, 1993). There is no single method for determining "the truth" of a situation. To develop an understanding of a particular situation or condition requires that one have an intimate knowledge of the processes involved (Patton, 1990). This understanding requires that one engage oneself with the reality of the situation in its particular context. In this way, over an extended period of time, one is able to view the situation with some clarity and mediate the possibility of biased interpretations (Salz, 1992).

This research project is underpinned by principles that are characteristic of a qualitative approach to research.

Research Principles

1. The project is a long-term inquiry into real life situations as they unfold.
2. The researcher is immersed in the details and specifics of the data.
3. The inquiry is holistic.
4. The phenomenon under study is understood as a complex system that is more than the sum of its parts.
5. The researcher is identified with the people, situation, and phenomenon under study.
6. To understand a phenomenon requires an awareness of its history and an understanding of its complexity.
7. The research is characterized by design flexibility.
8. The researcher is able to adapt inquiry to suit changing conditions and deeper understandings (nos. 1-8 adapted from Salz,1992, pp.111-112).
9. The participants decide on the problem to be investigated.
10. The researcher lives in the community and participates in its affairs.

The development of this project has followed cycles of inquiry that have changed, evolved, and deepened to suit directions indicated by the participants. The cycles of research and development that have characterized the project have been very much a learn-as-you go enterprise. Such a pattern of development is characteristic of a participatory action research approach to social and educational problems.

Some Inner City popular theatre performances have been video taped and serve to document the content of the plays. *Silent Cries*, a play about substance abuse and family violence has been transcribed from the video tape and is included in the appendix.

The data that informs the study will be presented in narrative form and drawn from multiple sources such as popular theatre programs and community performances, open-ended interviews, personal journal entries, and my long-term involvement with youth in Edmonton's inner city community. Inner City Drama began programming in 1986.

The Downtown Group, the group responsible for most of the data in this project, did not begin meeting until 1988. Since that time, there has been considerable change in group membership. The group does, however, have some long-term members. One member has been involved for 6 years, one for 5, three for over 3, and others from 3 years to 2 months. The number of young people in the group varies from 8-12. Approximately 80 per cent are First Nation or Métis youth.

Group meetings during the first 2 years took place between September and June. In 1990, the group chose to continue meeting throughout the summer months. This schedule has continued up to the present time. Meetings are usually held once a week and shift to twice a week when performances are scheduled. Since 1988, I would estimate the number of meetings at 300. Since 1989, the group have taken their issues to the greater community in the form of popular theatre performances that, following each performance, engage the audience and actors in conversation about the issues raised in the plays. These performances and conversations have explored issues such as drug and alcohol abuse, prostitution, suicide, family violence, aids, racism and other social issues. Through their popular theatre performances, the Downtown Group has reached out to other community groups throughout Alberta in venues that include the following:

McCauley Boys' and Girls' Club (1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993)
Mustard Seed Church (1990)
Boyle Street Community League (1994)
Chinook Theatre (1989,1990,1991)
The Edmonton Young Offenders Centre (1991,1992,1993,1994, 1995)
Nechi/Poundmaker Institute (1991,1992,1993,1994)
Ben Calf Robe Junior High School (1991)
St. Joseph's High School (1991)
The University of Alberta, Faculty of Education (1991,1992,1993)
The Global Visions Conference (1992,1993)
The Yellowhead Tribal Council "Partners in Education" Conference (1990)
The Yellowhead Tribal Council Aboriginal Youth Conference (1991,1992,1993,)
The First National Healing Our Youth Conference (1991)
Our Elders Speak Conference (1991)
Dreamcatcher Aboriginal Youth Conference (1993)
Department of Health and Welfare Substance Abuse Conference (1993)
Edmonton's Fringe Festival (1991,1992,1994)
Youth in Training (Peer Support) Conferences (1991-1994)
High Prairie Native Friendship Center (1990)
Rocky Mountain House Native Friendship Center (1994)
St. Paul Boys' and Girls' Club (1991,1992)
St. Paul Community Schools (1991,1992)
Lac La Biche Community High School (1992)
St. Paul Adolescent Treatment Center (1992,1994)
Bonnyville Native Rehabilitation Center (1992,1994)
Sicksicaw Nation (Addictions Awareness Week, 1992)
Wabasca/Desmarais Community (1992)
North American Alliance For Popular And Adult Education First General Assembly (Rocky Mountain House, Alberta, 1994)
Little Buffalo Community (1994)
National Youth Conference, Kananaskis (1994)
Dreamcatcher Aboriginal Youth Conference (1994)
Edmonton City Hall (Poverty Awareness Day, 1995)
Ben Calf Robe School (Aboriginal Justice Committee, 1995)

This list includes most of the major performances but it is not exhaustive. To date, Inner City popular theatre performances have reached over 6000 people. Each performance is followed by a discussion period in which some of these 6000 were engaged in conversation about the issues raised in the play.

Integrity of the Data

Performances are usually held for the group's own community. Community, in this sense, is understood in terms of experience rather than geography. The community is a community of common experience. Most groups that Inner City performs for are intimately familiar with the issues in the play. The discussion period then becomes a testimony to the integrity of the data. This pattern of multiple sources ensures triangulation and is critical in establishing the integrity of the data. This need for integrity is recognized by Lather (1986), who extends the necessity for rigour in the research process to include "construct validity" which she identifies as being the "confrontation with the experiences of people in their daily lives," with "face validity" which describes the process of reviewing analysis with a sub-sample of respondents, and with "catalytic validity" which describes a research process that empowers participants to transform their social reality (Lather, 1986, p. 67). Construct validity will be maintained through my long-term association with youth in the inner city community and my residence in the Inner City House, known by the youth as the drama house. The house is located in Edmonton's downtown core and is an integral part of the Inner City project. The house was established by the organization to provide accommodation for youth in need and much-needed office space for the project's administration.

This development allowed me to deepen my understanding of the realities of day-to-day life as experienced by the youth. I was in the office nearly every day. The days were not limited to eight hours. Fourteen and sixteen hour days were not uncommon. I also slept in the house three nights a week. My role became that of a house facilitator rather than a house supervisor. The house operates on a cooperative basis and decisions are made by consensus. All house issues are addressed at regular house meetings. This "live in" period lasted approximately 2 1/2 half years.

To ensure face validity, a committee of youth participating in this project was formed to review all data relevant to their experience. Catalytic validity will be determined through the development of this research project.

In the Inner City project, participatory action research describes a process in which groups of people work together with the intention of gaining some understanding of and insight into their social reality, learning from their own experience and making that knowledge accessible to others. The reflective nature of this practice has led to insights, breakthroughs, frustrations, and disappointments.

Rationale For The Study

The inner city areas of most North American cities are rife with poverty, unemployment, crime, prostitution, substance abuse, and violence. Children growing up in such an environment become street wise at an early age. The process of becoming street wise and the pressures of the environment encourage one to adopt attitudes and behaviours that are not conducive to personal growth or academic success. The lads in Willis' (1977) study of working class youth experience a similar phenomenon. The social structure is reproduced as much through the lads' resistance to the dominant ideology as through its hegemony (Apple, 1982; Walker 1988; Willis, 1977). However, there is more to this situation than mere economic determinism.

The very attitudes and behaviours that are necessary for life on the street conflict with the norms and values of the dominant culture as reflected in the school. These "street" attitudes and behaviours are often interpreted by authorities such as teachers, social workers, administrators, police, and members of the judiciary as forms of resistance. The resistance is punished and the resister enters into a destructive cycle of resistance and punishment that ensures the resister a place in the lower strata of the social order. The end result is a devastating loss of human potential.

Students from working class or poor families are often tracked into school programs that limit their potential and virtually ensure them a place on the lower rungs of the social order (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Curtis, Livingston, & Smaller, 1992). This phenomenon results in youth being stigmatized and marginalized by the dominant social order, which in turn leads to student resistance in the form of destructive behaviours, drug and alcohol abuse, violence, and the eventual "dropping out" of school. The end result is reinforced through structural violence, results in wasted human potential, and creates enormous costs which must be borne by all members of society. Structural violence is embedded in many of our social, economic, and cultural practices. It is legitimized through the domination of one group's ideology over another's (Kohler and Alcock, 1976:343; Galtung, 1990; Toh & Floresca-Cawagas, 1991).

Summary

It is my solidarity with inner city youth, my sorrow and outrage over this loss of human potential, and the unjust social conditions faced by many children from working class and poor families that brings me to this study. Many youth are caught in a generational web of poverty and dysfunction that is not of their own making but is reinforced by their own actions. The relationship between the actions of the youth and the problem of structural violence is complex and not at all clear. It will, however, be subject to illumination through the course of this project.

In the next chapter I will weave a theoretical framework that is multi-dimensional and multi-faceted. I will explore important theoretical positions that lay bare the nature of structural violence on a global scale. After a brief overview of the reality of structural violence in countries of the South, the chapter will focus on conditions in the industrialized North.

CHAPTER II

STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

Structural violence is a global phenomenon that is responsible for pain, suffering, and death in the countries of the South as well as the North. The reality of structural violence is multi-faceted and multi-dimensional. The victims of structural violence are most often the poorest of the poor. Silent and inarticulate, they suffer their fate in what Paulo Freire terms a "culture of silence" (Shore & Freire, 1987, pp. 122-123). There is, therefore, a need to explore the nature of structural violence and the role that it plays in the lives of the world's poor. Thus, there is also a need to define violence in broader terms than merely a purposeful and direct act causing injury or death.

The term *violence* has, in both popular and intellectual circles, usually referred to the use of physical force causing injury or death. In the context of human relationships, violence can thus accompany acts or conflicts ranging from interpersonal altercations, assaults and the like, to community uprisings, and to wars within and among nations. From the millions who perished or were wounded in the world wars of this century as well as the innumerable civil and regional and armed conflicts to the thousands injured or murdered through the force of violent crimes, these uncounted casualties and other statistics reflect the continuing pervasiveness in today's world of violence as interpreted in the physical sense.

In the field of global education and overlapping movements such as peace education, development education, and other related areas of educational concern, there is properly a substantive concern with issues and problems of physically violent conflicts from micro to macro levels. Not only do we need to understand the root causes of such conflicts but global education also seeks to develop an empowering of individuals, communities, and societies to seek non-violent resolution of conflicts.

At the same time, however, global and peace educators do not regard as adequate a conception of violence that is cast in the mold of wars and other physically forceful actions leading to death, injury, or damage. Nationally and internationally the poor are victims of a social structure that violates their very humanity. The poor of many South countries suffer under oppressive social systems that violate basic human rights. Millions die of hunger in the South while diet books become best sellers in the industrialized North. Subsistence farmers in the South are pushed from their small plots to make way for cash crops that can be exported to the rich North. For example, over 540 million tons of grain are exported from the poor South to feed animals in the rich North. While this export of grain for animal feed is taking place, "forty thousand children die every day [in the South] because they are deprived of resources" (Trainer, 1989:489).

If the Third World (South) is able to grow enough food to export to rich countries, why do millions of people die from hunger? Why do many poor farmers not have enough land to grow their own food? Why have they not benefited from the increased yields that accompany the modernization of agriculture and other development projects? Why do some countries export food to the North yet rely on aid to feed their people? When many governments in the South enthusiastically spend huge amounts of national resources on militarization, why do the poor majorities in those societies lack the basic resources of health? In sum, global and peace educators regard as inadequate a conception of violence which is limited to physically forceful actions that lead to death, injury or damage. Is it not equally violent when societal and global systems do not sustain the basic needs of their population and thus cause premature death, pain, and suffering? Thus apart from direct physical violence, it is meaningful to talk about *structural violence*--a term which global/peace/development education has articulated as an explanatory tool for analyzing a wide range of social phenomena and conflict.

Dimensions Of Structural Violence

Throughout the world, millions of human beings die annually as a result of structural violence. Structural violence is the violence of unjust economic, political, social, and cultural structures and practices. An understanding of the concept of structural violence, first developed by international peace researcher Johan Galtung (1969), is indispensable for understanding the inequality and injustice that scars both South and North societies and dominates the global system. The number of deaths caused by structural violence, the violence of starvation and malnutrition, have been estimated at 18,000,000 human beings annually (Kim, 1984: p.186).

The immensity of this tragedy and its effects on the world's children, according to former UNICEF Director James Grant, accounts for the deaths of 12 million children each year, most of whom die unnecessarily from malnutrition and hunger-related causes. This tragedy, Grant points out "is the equivalent of one hundred and twenty Hiroshimas." This devastation means that 100,000 children are being incinerated every day, every year. If this tragedy took place through the direct violence of war, "the world would be up in arms. But somehow we accept this--we take it for granted" (Grant, 1987, cited in Toh, 1987a:59).

The situation that Grant describes amounts to a state of war for a large percentage of the earth's population. The fruits of structural violence are poverty, hunger, and death. Structural violence, the silent killer, is part of our global system. Kohler and Alcock (1976) argue that the system is structured in such a way that many of its members suffer more hunger, poverty, and death than others due to the unequal distribution of the earth's resources. For example, in 1965, they calculate that 17,396,000 people in South countries died as a result of structural violence (Kohler and Alcock,1976:349).

Consider the following statistics which, when given a human face, detail the devastation and suffering caused by the violence of economic, political, and social structures.

Manifestations Of Structural Violence

The world produces enough food to provide the current global population with more than an adequate diet, yet there is suffering on a global scale. For example,

- 950,000,000 people are chronically malnourished

- 1,100,000,000 live in poverty
- 1,500,000,000 have unsafe drinking water
- 10,000,000 malnourished women have malnourished babies
- 600,000,000 women have nutritional anemia
- 14,000,000 children die yearly of preventable diseases
- 700,000 children are completely or partially blind due to vitamin A deficiency
- 3,500,000 children die of dehydration (Sivard, 1991)

In light of such extensive and intensive human suffering, the traditional definition of violence, a purposeful and direct act causing death or injury, is too narrow. It allows for the acceptance and legitimization of unacceptable social orders and practices. Violence must be defined broadly enough to address the inequalities and violent social structures present in some societies. Social, political, economic, and cultural inequalities and injustices create the conditions for and perpetuate structural violence. It shows up in unequal power relationships, unequal life chances, and in the inequality of resource distribution (Galtung, 1969). Structural violence then may be defined as injury that occurs to individuals or groups due to differential access to societal resources through the normal operation of the structures and institutions of a society as well as the global system (Webb, 1986).

For example, in the Caribbean, "people starve beside growing tomatoes and flowers for export." This devastation does not only take place in the Caribbean: "fifteen of the poorest countries in the world devote more acres to cash crops for export than to food for their own hungry people" (Trainer, F. 1985, p. 141).

In the New Internationalist, Budhoo, a former International Monetary Fund (IMF) economist, asserts that "the IMF and World Bank are key elements in an economic order that is deepening Third World poverty... " (1988:9). Millions of poor people are forced from their land every year. The landless, uprooted by pressures in the global economy, evicted from their land to make way for cash crops or hydro-electric schemes, form the bulk of the poverty-stricken people in the staggering statistics quoted above (Collins & Fowler; George, 1987; Lappe, 1977; Payer, 1979). These conditions are perpetuated when those low on economic resources are also low on education and low on self-esteem. They become alienated and marginalized in their own society. This structural violence is deepened through political repression and cultural discrimination (Galtung, 1990). To some, Galtung argues, this may appear to be non-violence but to the victims it means a slow death.

Structural violence can be external within the international system as well as internal within national societies. It may be perpetrated through colonialism or neo-colonialism and all the manifestations of imperialism in its various cultural, economic, political, scientific, and technological forms (Lagos, 1975:82-83). The following table provides an indicator of the external and internal dimensions of structural violence.

Table 1 Dimensions of Structural Violence

External	**Internal**
Through colonialism, neo-colonialism, and imperialism in their various cultural, economic, political, scientific, and technological forms	All social, economic, political, and cultural relationships that limit the participation of individuals in their society
Development policies that benefit the rich at the expense of the poor	Differential access to social resources such as health, education, and political participation
World Bank and IMF imposed restructuring policies intended to ensure repayment of Third World debt	Imposing the values of one culture over another
The practices of some transnational corporations (TNC) and the ideology of consumerism, such as Nestles' aggressive marketing of infant formula in South countries	Marginalization, exploitation, and oppression in all its forms

Adapted from Sklair 1991, pp. 155-157 and Toh & Floresca-Cawagas, 1991, p.32)

Structural violence is part of our political, social, economic, and cultural practices. It is legitimated through the domination of one group's ideology over another. "Whenever persons are harmed, maimed, or killed by poverty we speak of structural violence" (Kohler & Alcock, 1976, p. 343). The global system is structured in such a way that many people in South countries suffer systemically more from structural violence than others due to the unequal distribution of global resources and the dominance of one culture over another (Galtung, 1990). This structural violence has internal and international dimensions (Galtung, 1969; 1971; Kohler & Alcock, 1976; Eckhardt, 1979; Webb, 1986; Toh & Floresca-Cawagas, 1991). Economic, political, social, and cultural systems characterized by structural violence became part of the global system and were deeply entrenched at both a global and a local level through the institutions of colonialism. These structurally violent systems were perpetuated through neo-colonialism in all its forms and modernization development programs that benefit a wealthy minority at the expense of the poor majority. Structural violence is legitimized through the dominance of one group's ideology, culture, norms, and values over another.

Structural Violence In The South

The structural inequality that became established in the wake of colonialism and entrenched through conventional development programs created conditions of structural violence for millions of people throughout the South. The roots of this inequality are buried deep in our colonial past. The pattern for the contemporary global economic system was established through the colonial process. It is based on the market system and on modernization policies and programs that deliver the most available wealth to the rich and produce inappropriate development in the South (Hoogvelt, 1976).

Development

The need to modernize and develop South countries followed in the wake of the Second World War and the financial activity of the United States. It was assumed that modernization development policies would raise the living standards of people in the poor South countries which were termed underdeveloped. The rush to develop the undeveloped countries was powered by foreign investment, international aid programs, the modernization of agriculture, and new technologies from the developed countries. The goal of these development programs was to raise the GNP of South countries by increasing production and the sale of export products. In this way, as the economy expanded and GNP grew, the financial benefits would, after a time, trickle down to the poorest members of society and an expanding cycle of growth would be created, raising the living standards of the all members of society (Foster-Carter, 1986; Rostow, 1971).

This model of development has, over the years, come under increasing criticism that has been marked by the emergence of a critical, alternative paradigm. Theorists from within the critical paradigm argue that what has been occurring in the name of 'development' has resulted in the underdevelopment of much of the South. The advanced industrial nations of the North, by restricting developing countries to the production and export of natural resources, have slanted the world markets in their favour. This development has served to enrich the North and small groups of allied elites in the South. (Frank, 1975; George, 1987; Toh, 1987; Trainer, 1985, 1989). Free enterprise and the role of foreign investment in development are salient features of modernization economics. Foreign investment is integral to the integration of South countries into global markets. This integration involves moving societies from a traditional state through changes in economic, political, social, and cultural institutions and relationships, changes that mark the emergence of an elite group, poised to capitalize on the growth of consumer society with its global economic global structure (Foster-Carter, 1986; Hoogvelt, 1976; McClelland, 1961; Rostow, 1971; Toh, 1980;). Thus begins the march to modernization and an economy based on exporting products and resources to the rich North. This process, for many people, creates conditions of structural violence.

The benefits from foreign investment and increased GNP do not trickle down to the poor majority but accrue to a small elite in the South. This creates a situation of dominance between nations with the developed North dominating the undeveloped South economically, politically, and culturally. To ensure a healthy bottom line more money flows out of South countries in the form of profits than flows into the countries in the form of foreign investment and aid (George, 1987; Sklair, 1991 Trainer, 1985) The modernization development model also creates a situation of dominance within nations, whereby a small elite group is able to dominate the poor majority (Hoogvelt, 1976; Frank, 1975; George, 1987). The exploitive nature of modernization policies and programs and their external and internal manifestations create conditions of structural violence.

Modernization theory has dominated development thinking for decades. The assumption of steady progress toward Western style democracies gave way to a focus on political stability and a stable business climate.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the modernization approach to development came under growing criticism (Frank, 1975; George, 1987; Hoogvelt, 1976; Toh, 1980; Trainer, 1985, 1989). Despite the promise of modernization theorists, rather than becoming more 'developed' South countries became characterized by a growing gap between the rich and the poor, by Western aid flows that created more problems than they solved, and by triggering the growing poverty and desperation of South populations. Modernization policies and practices, despite the growing criticism, underpin the philosophy and development strategies of international agencies such as the World Bank and other international aid agencies.

Critical theorists argue that conventional growth strategies often result in the opposite of trickle down. In fact, the results of development policies such as the modernization of agriculture and the spread of Western mechanized farming methods are dispossessing large numbers of tenant farmers and forcing large numbers of landless peasants into the large slums that surround cities in the South. This practice enriches planters who terminate leases of peasant farmers in order to increase their production of export crops and creates large numbers of landless peasants (Trainer, 1989). This distortion is increased by its focus on inappropriate technology in areas where there is an over-supply of unemployed labour. The standard development model, according to George, (1985) is geared to mesh with a small elite group in the upper strata of South societies and grinds up peasants and anyone else not connected to the upper strata. The process creates conditions of structural violence.

Theorists such as Sklair (1991) argue that the theoretical foundation of the global system paradigm is anchored in transnational capitalist practices and tied to the need for global capitalism to continually expand production and international trade. This situation requires a stable political climate and a population that is ready to consume the vast array of products that are made available. The system is dominated by a transnational capitalist class (TCC) that strives to control global power and transnational corporations (TNCs) that strive to control global resources. The system is driven by the cultural ideology of consumerism which is reinforced by the mass media. The transnational capitalist class rules directly through national capitalist political parties or even through socialist democratic parties that pose no fundamental threat to the global capitalist system. The structurally violent consequences of this system are manifested in the growing gap between the rich and the poor, in the dispossessed and landless peasants who, displaced in the name of export crops and the global economy, die of hunger and malnutrition.

Education

The problems of development and underdevelopment have an educational component that is intended to move South countries and economies toward modernization. Education, like other areas of development, has not lived up to the hopes of development officials.

During the decades since the 1960s, educational expansion in most South countries, rather than promoting social mobility and more egalitarian societies, has perpetuated social and economic inequality. In the 1960s, experts predicted that an expanded school system would help create equal opportunities between social classes, equalize income distribution and develop a more employable labour force. Expansion during this period was so rapid and optimism so great that it was difficult to imagine anything remotely connected to an oversupply of educated workers. In 1960 the number of pupils in South countries registered in primary and secondary schools increased from 144 million in 1960 to 335 million in 1976. The number of students registered in universities during this period rose from 2.6 million to 12.5 million, a 500 percent increase (Carnoy, 1982). The UNESCO/World Bank Cooperative Agreement, signed in June 1964, reflected the optimism of the period. A series of ministerial conferences held in Karachi, Addis Ababa, and Santiago put in place ambitious plans for educational expansion (Jones, 1992). However, what the UNESCO/World Bank initiative represented is the collision between the policies of modernizing agencies and organizations and traditional cultures.

Traditional cultures were considered by many to be undeveloped and backward, whereas the cultures of the industrialized North represented development, progress, and wealth. The educational result of this situation in most South countries was a program of schooling that resembled that which was in place in the North. These programs were built on the assumption that moving the economy and relations of production toward the modern sector would create the need for an educated workforce (Bacchus, 1981; Dore, 1976; Simmons, 1980). A modernized and educated workforce then would create the economic growth necessary to provide modern sector jobs.

Structural Violence In The South: A Summary

For the majority of people in the South, the illusion of social mobility which accompanied the rapid expansion of schooling in the post independence period did not result in social equality or the good life. What it did result in was a Western-oriented political system that catered to a select few and focused on the political and economic needs of the advanced industrial countries. For many others in South countries, it meant educated unemployment; among peasants it meant increasing illiteracy and a widening gap between the rich and the poor.

The expansion of schooling has not mediated poverty in the South nor has it created the promised social mobility for more than a chosen few. It has, in fact, widened the gap between the rich and the poor (Carnoy, 1982; Trainer, 1989; Yeakey, 1981). The rural population represents the majority and it is this group that is faced with inferior instruction, buildings, equipment, and supplies (Eliou, 1976; Urch, 1985). The region that one was born in, one's family background, and one's gender had a significant effect on whether one was successful in the school system.

What was becoming painfully obvious to the vast majority of people was that the hoped-for social mobility and economic prosperity was not possible. The promise of education resulted in schooling that, rather than promoting social mobility, created and perpetuated social and economic inequality. The poor began in a disadvantaged position and rarely closed the gap. In many cases the gap between rich and poor widened during this period of educational expansion, and conditions of structural violence deepened. The dream of social mobility and modern sector jobs drove people to urban centers where they often ended up unemployed and existing day to day in an urban ghetto.

The problems of structural violence, poverty, oppression, and the violation of human rights are not limited to South countries. These problems are a burden for many people in the industrialized North. The numbers of homeless and unemployed in many North American cities continues to climb. Inequality, both nationally and internationally, is perpetuated through economic, political, social, and cultural institutions.

Structural Violence In The North

Countries in the industrialized North are often looked upon by those in the South as places of unlimited opportunity. But the reality of life in these countries does not, for large numbers of people, match the myth. The economies of North America, Western Europe, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand have experienced tremendous growth in the decades since the Second World War. However, this growth has been accompanied by systemic inequalities. In the advanced industrial societies of the North, individuals with vast fortunes co-exist with those who are in a state of desperate poverty. The economic expansion that created and is still creating this wealth has a dark underside that is responsible for the marginalization of people at the lower end of the social class structure, many of whom remain permanently unemployed or underemployed. This systemic inequality has class, gender, and ethnic dimensions. Some women feel the combined weight of these dimensions of inequality. The subordination of women and their disproportionate share of wealth, power, and prestige has deep historical roots and is manifested in unequal life chances. Feminist analysis of this inequality has pointed to the unequal opportunities available to women in the school system, the work place, and the political arena. Since the 1970s some improvements have been made. However, despite the recent attempts to address these issues, gender-based inequality is reproduced by each succeeding generation.

Class, gender, and ethnic inequality also characterize Canadian society. Ethnic inequality in Canada is manifested and maintained through unequal group relations. The class structure of Canadian society is a product of colonial domination which marginalized the indigenous or First Nations people and the subsequent patterns of selective immigration. Historically the economic development of Canada has been dependent on the selective immigration policies of the federal government. Various ethnic groups at different stages in the country's economic development have been used to fill low-status, low-paying positions (Li, 1988). This policy of selective immigration resulted in a complex system of stratification that has class, gender, and ethnic dimensions and is structurally violent. Structural violence then is manifested in class, gender, and ethnic inequalities, in the existence of persistent poverty, in streaming and tracking practices in schools, in long-term unemployment, in long-term welfare dependency, in criminal activity, and in drug and alcohol abuse.

Class-Based Inequalities

In the capitalist economies of advanced industrial nations such as Canada, the distinction between social classes is not always clear. A small proportion of the population (between 1 and 2.5 per cent) make up the capitalist class, while the remainder--with the exception of a small percentage who are self-employed business people--are workers. Workers form 90 per cent of the total population and are divided into several distinct layers that range from highly paid professionals to the working poor (Edwards, Reich, & Weisskopf, 1986; Hiller, 1991). The working poor are included in the 15.4 per cent of Alberta families identified as living in poverty (Edmonton Social Planning Council, 1993). This inequality is manifested in inadequate food, clothing, and housing for the poor while others live affluent lifestyles with ready access to political, economic, social, and cultural privilege. For many people, these conditions are structurally violent and reproduce themselves in each succeeding generation.

The status and prestige of professional and technical workers is higher than that of workers such as carpenters or labourers who occupy the lower end of the occupational structure. Many professional and technical workers consider themselves middle class rather than working class. These groups often have cultural patterns and political attitudes that are different from those at the lower end of the social structure (Sherman & Wood, 1979). The status and prestige that is associated with middle and upper class groups can become entrenched over time. Children from a more privileged background have opportunities that are not available to those from the lower levels of the social structure, opportunities such as the necessary economic and academic support that provides ready access to private and post secondary schooling, the benefits of inherited wealth, greater access to career openings, social contacts, and other class advantages that favour the more privileged (Clement, 1975).

This is not to say that social mobility is not possible. A small percentage of children from the lower levels of the social structure are able to overcome the physical, psychological, economic, and cultural barriers of their background to "get an advanced education and use their education to climb to the top of the class ladder" (Curtis et al., 1992, p.11; Schmitter-Heisler, 1991). These manifestations of structural violence are barriers that perpetuate inequality and the conditions of structural violence. This existing inequality in turn is likely to produce further inequality that is deepened and reproduced over time (Bourdieu, 1973; Li, P. 1988).

According to the principles of meritocracy, the most able individuals undergo the necessary training for a hierarchy of vocational roles and, based on their own merit, assume their places in the social structure. The ideology of meritocracy is a dominant theme in capitalist societies. It is incorporated into the structure of social institutions such as schools, government bureaucracy, factories, and offices (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Li, 1988). The ideology of meritocracy pervades our social institutions, justifies a "blame the victim" mentality, and provides a rationalization for the inequalities of the capitalist system (Li, 1988).

This view is open for criticism on several points. If one begins in an unequal position, how can one's position in the social structure be based solely on merit? How can one's motivation and preparation for success be equal if, through no fault of one's own, one is born into a family with little formal education, is unemployed, sees oneself as a social failure, and transmits these attitudes to one's children? Can the children help but internalize this view of themselves and their role in the social structure when their home environment and the institutions of society provide constant reminders of their subordination? Can inequality be justified by ignoring these factors? (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Curtis, et al., 1992; Hillier, 1991).

The condition of children living below the poverty line is marked by a low standard of living, poor nutrition, and inadequate health care. One in five Canadian children live in poverty (Statistics Canada, 1988, cited in Hiller, 1991). The social relations of production are dominated by an elite group of capitalists and managers that are successful in legitimizing the structures of inequality that most people come to regard as a natural state of affairs (Clement, 1975). These conditions are established and perpetuated by the dominant class and their alliances. Their particular interests are maintained by the institutions of our society (Curtis,et al., 1992). The transmission of class advantages takes place through the ready access to capital and economic advantage, political influence, social position, advanced education, private schools, and career contacts (Clement, 1975). Thus, conditions of inequality and structural violence are maintained and reproduced. This view of social inequality, many critical theorists argue, is deterministic and mechanical. It results in the over-simplification of complex social issues. There is more at work here than inequality being mechanically reproduced. There is also, among the various social influences and conditions, the unpredictable results of human agency (Giroux, 1992; Willis, 1977:53).

Gender Inequality

In 1900 only 16 per cent of Canadian women worked for wages. During World War Two women formed 33.2 per cent of Canadian wage workers. This reserve army of working women retreated into the kitchen when the men returned from the war. In 1951 the percentage of women in the workforce began to increase again and reached 24.0 per cent in 1951, 29.5 in 1961, and climbed to 54.3 in 1985 (Labour Canada, 1987 cited in Mackie, 1991). This dramatic increase of women's participation in the labour force has not seen a corresponding rise in gender equality. The increased number of women in the workforce has swelled the ranks of feminized occupations. For example, in 1985 women accounted for 79.7 per cent of all clerical workers, 56.3 per cent of service sector employees, 78.2 per cent of medical and health personnel, and 60.7 per cent of teachers (Mackie, 1991). However, women are not as strongly represented in managerial roles. In Canadian banking, for example, women held 72 per cent of all full time positions, 38.3 percent of middle management roles, and a mere 2.9 per cent of upper management positions (Fife, 1989, cited in Mackie, 1991). On average, "women in the labour force are still earning 65 per cent of what men earn" (Corbeil, 1992, p. 14). Single mothers fare worst of all. In 1990, 12.1 per cent of all Canadian families lived below the poverty line. In the same year, 47.0 per cent of families headed by women lived in poverty (Corbeil, 1992). This situation is not improving. In fact, Canadian families headed by low income women have tripled in the past 28 years (Alberta Status Of Women Action Committee, 1991).

The concentration of women into low status positions is a form of gender segregation and is indicative of structural inequality. Structural inequality describes a process where members of advantaged groups control a dominant portion of wealth, power, and prestige. Through the control of these resources, certain groups are able to maintain and improve their positions in the social structure, thereby creating the conditions of structural violence through the inequality that is built into social, political, economic, and cultural institutions. It is manifested in unequal power relationships, unequal life chances, and in the inequality of resource distribution (Galtung, 1969). Thus inequality is entrenched in our social structure and manifested in the inequality of patriarchy.

The traditional patriarchal family structure provides a point of reference for any analysis of gender inequality. It is the structural inequality of the patriarchal family that produces and reproduces gender inequality. The patriarchal family structure creates conditions in which men dominate women. It creates the stratification of family life in which men exercise social and political control over women. This domination and subordination supports the capitalist mode of production and is reproduced in the work place. Feminism and feminist theories have provided important theoretical analyses of this systemic inequality.

For liberal feminists, equality and liberation for women are possible within the boundaries of the existing democratic and economic order. Problems of inequality and oppression will be addressed by education, employment, and equality before the law. Existing societal arrangements will require modification to provide women equality with men but the structural features of the capitalist system are not in question (Mackie, 1991).

For Marxist feminists, capitalism justifies the employment of women in low wage sectors of the economy with the notion that they are "secondary earners" supplementing the family income. In the Marxist view, solutions to women's oppression lie in the overthrow of the capitalist system (Fox, 1980, cited in Mackie, 1991; Giele, 1988; Mackie, 1991). For radical feminists the basis of women's oppression is not in capitalism or the class system. It is not an unintended consequence of other factors that keep women in the "reserve army" of capitalist workers. Women are oppressed through male domination first and foremost, and as a secondary consequence by the class society. In this view, it is not the capitalist system that makes women victims of violence, rape, and other forms of abuse. It is their sexuality and the power relations between the sexes that is at the root of women's oppression. As a result, women's liberation will require more than a restructuring of social institutions. Women's oppression will only be addressed by a fundamental restructuring of the relationships between men and women (Mackie, 1991; Giele, 1988). Socialist feminists incorporate the theoretical positions of both traditional Marxists and radical feminists into their perspective. Thus, the relations of production and the problem of male dominance combine to make patriarchy a system in which the oppressors are themselves oppressed: men oppress women, themselves, and other men. Liberation from this oppression and equality between the sexes will come from a restructuring of the relations of production and a restructuring of reproductive relations (Mackie, 1991).

Ethnic Inequalities

As with gender inequality, ethnic inequality has deep historical roots. Ethnicity, and ethnic group are used here to define or describe a collectivity within a larger society with a common ancestry, a shared historical past, and a shared cultural focus on one or more symbolic elaments that define their ethnicity. Ethnicity then is "embodied in shared beliefs, norms, values, preferences, in-group memories, loyalties, and consciousness of kind" (O'Sullivan See & Wilson, 1988, p. 224). The salience of these traits vary from group to group. References to race or racial groups and issues concerning Canada's Aboriginal people are incorporated under the heading ethnic inequalities.

Aboriginal People And Structural Violence

Victims of colonial domination and cultural violence, aboriginal people in Canada were made a dependent population by the Indian Act of 1876. The act created a system of reserves and in the process made a formerly independent people into a dependent population (DINAD, 1990).

Conquest and occupation generally followed initial contact. The establishment of a colonial administration paved the way for the penetration of white settlers. The native population were driven from their lands and placed on reservations. In Canada's Northwest Territories, this process was made possible with treaties 1 through 11. These treaties were signed between 1871 and 1921

(DINAD, 1990). The native population at this time was subsequently decimated by cultural destruction and suffered the effects of disease, epidemics, malnutrition and for many, starvation (Dion, 1979). The Indian Act of 1876 gave the Canadian government power to dominate the lives of Indian people living on reserves. In the years following the implementation of the Act, Indian residential schools began the great task of assimilation. The motivation for the establishment of Indian industrial and residential schools, particularly after 1870, provides important insight into the nature of Indian/white relations in North America for the next century. During the 1880s and 1890s industrial schools were replaced with residential schools (Bull, 1991; Haig-Brown; 1988; Pinower, 1989). The objective of these schools was to civilize the savage Indian children and assimilate them into the dominant culture (Bull, 1991; Haig-Brown; 1988; Tobias, 1983). The cultural violence that was part of daily life for many of the students in residential schools included practices such as students being punished for speaking their native language, taking part in cultural rituals, and being separated from their families for years. This cultural violence created generations of students who were deprived of their traditional culture and marginalized by the dominant culture (Bull, 1991; Haig-Brown, 1988). The resulting cultural destruction and loss of self-confidence was deepened through harsh discipline, physical, and sexual abuse (Haig-Brown, 1988; Hodgson, 1990). The violence and inhumanity of this process and the cultural violence of Indian Residential Schools contributed to the creation of a dependent population. For example, the Canadian government's current (1992-1993) Royal Commission on Aboriginal People heard the following testimony from aboriginal people forced by the Canadian government to relocate their settlement in the High Arctic. Inuit relocate Markoosie Patsauq testified that after the move that the people did not know where to hunt. There was no daylight from November to February. The people survived by eating the garbage of the white man. Travelling to the dump became a replacement for the hunt (Patsauq, 1993). The subordination and domination that took place between the Europeans and the aboriginal people of Canada is similar to situations that took place between colonizer and colonized around the world, for example, the Aborigines of Australia, the Maoris of New Zealand, and other aboriginal peoples throughout the South (Jordon, 1986; Maclaren, 1985; Native People The Facts 1988).

Europeans with their superior military technology were able to subdue the native population and convince them of European superiority. In the face of such superiority, native people internalized their perceived inferiority. This process of domination and subordination is part of the colonial process and becomes most obvious in schools. Schooling, for Canada's aboriginal people, was an element of colonialism that represented an attempt at assimilation and an effort to legitimize oppressive structures (Bull, 1991; Galtung, 1971).

Freire regards this process as the "culture of silence." In this way one class can dominate another, men can dominate women, and one culture can dominate another. Powerful economic and social groups acting in their own interests can, through legislation and other avenues of power, further their own interests. The structural violence created by this situation is not restricted to the evils of history. Fueled by the industrial and corporate community's demand for resources, it is played out on a daily basis in Canadian society.

Consider, for example, the Cree people of Lubicon Lake. They have been attempting to negotiate a land settlement with the federal government for the last 50 years. During the last 20 years the federal and provincial governments, along with several resource companies, have realized millions of dollars in profits from lands the Lubicon people claim as their traditional territory (World Council of Churches, 1983). This economic activity has reduced the Lubicon people to a state of dependency by altering the natural environment and destroying their traditional way of life (Manly, 1985). Drugs, alcohol, despair, and suicide have replaced traditional pursuits. Migration to the cities for many native people usually means living in an urban ghetto and subsisting on food banks and welfare. This creates an urban underclass that is alienated and marginalized from the dominant society. Suffering from generations of colonial domination, reeling from cultural destruction, racist policies and attitudes take their toll. Resistance or escape can take the form of violence, crime, drug or alcohol abuse, and other dysfunctional behaviours that reinforce racist attitudes, continue the process of marginalization, and create further inequality (Hodgson, 1990). This in turn reinforces their subordinate position and reproduces conditions of structural violence that permeate the institutions of society. In Canada, the scars of structural violence have marked members of other ethnic groups as well.

Throughout Canada's history, ethnic groups have been used by the dominant group, through selective immigration policies, to fill the country's need for agricultural and industrial labourers, farmers, skilled workers, professionals, or whatever sectors of the work force that needed reinforcement. The dominant group, Anglo Saxon Protestants, mostly from Ontario and Britain dominated the West. They had established almost exclusive control of the political, legal, cultural, and educational institutions in Alberta as well as in other prairie provinces (Palmer, 1982). From this position of dominance, they were able to justify racist policies and practices and the Anglo Saxon group's domination of ethnic minorities (Li, 1988).

In the 1870s, Chinese labourers were allowed into Canada to work on railroad construction. Japanese and East Indians also immigrated during this period. In 1884, when construction of the railroad was complete, the federal government imposed a Head Tax of $10 on each Chinese immigrant. The head tax was gradually raised until in 1904 it reached $500. The Head Tax was followed by the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1923, which was not repealed until 1947. Chinese people faced racist policies and attitudes that limited their opportunities for employment to restaurants and laundries (Hiller, 1991).

The need to settle the prairies underpinned the immigration of peasant farmers from eastern Europe. These homesteaders, mainly of Ukrainian stock, faced racism and discrimination once they arrived in Canada. From the Irish immigrants in Ontario during the mid 1800s, and other immigrants who filled working-class neighbourhoods across the country, to the central and eastern European immigrants that homesteaded the west at the turn of the century, new immigrants were alleged to be prone to crime, violence, and drunkenness and were generally considered morally deficient. These racist policies and fears reached their zenith during World Wars One and Two. Ukrainian people during WW 1 and Japanese people during WW 2 were branded as enemy aliens, had their property confiscated and were relocated into internment camps.

The ethnic composition, class structure, and basic assumptions concerning ethnic groups in Canada generally, and in the West specifically, grew out of racist immigration policies put in place by the Canadian government during the early period of settlement. These settlement patterns and subsequent class structure shaped the character of ethnic relations for decades (Li, 1988; Palmer, 1982; Troper, 1985).

The racist nature of early immigration policies gave way to a point system following World War Two. This system discouraged the more obvious forms of racism. Canada's more recent immigrants now include people from countries such as the West Indies, Haiti, Vietnam, Hong Kong, India, and Pakistan. However, John Porter in the Vertical Mosaic (1965) argued that ethnicity and class in Canadian society were directly related. He pointed out that many ethnic groups face unequal representation in the occupational hierarchy. Dominant in this hierarchy is a small group of powerful elites who are mainly of British background and dominate political power in Canada.

In 1971, just six years after the publication of the Vertical Mosaic previous patterns of racial prejudice, discrimination, Anglo conformity, and assimilation were officially replaced with the tolerance and understanding of multiculturalism. The policy of multiculturalism has been criticized on several fronts. Multiculturalism, critics argue, creates a smoke screen of tolerance and understanding that blurs the problem of ethnic inequality, of fundamental social inequalities, and the reality of racism (Hiller, 1991; Li, 1988).

While there have been improvements in official policies with respect to ethnic relations in Canada, structural inequality and racist attitudes persist. Multiculturalism, according to Peter Li, (1988) has done little to combat racism or end discriminatory practices. There is little evidence to indicate that racial prejudice and ethnic inequality is less evident now than before official multiculturalism.

This form of structural violence has its roots in Canada's colonial past and the inherent racism of the colonial administration. It has persisted through government policies and popular attitudes. The policy of multiculturalism promotes the image of a tolerant and equal society and in the process blurs questions of inequality and structural violence. One need only reflect on the situation of aboriginal people in Canada to realize that problems of structural inequality and structural violence persist and are not being addressed in a substantial way.

Schools And Structural Violence In The North

When schooling reflects the norms and values of the dominant group, and students if they are to succeed must conform to those norms and values, the school becomes a structurally violent institution. The violence is perpetrated by an education system governed and maintained through the ideology of meritocracy and practices such as tracking and streaming. Through the formal education system, the dominant culture imposes its will on others and uses methods of coercion--such as the promise of a better life, standardized examinations, and the distribution of degrees (tickets to a better life) or threats that the illusory life will not be realized--to maintain unjust social structures. These tools and processes create the conditions for structural violence and result in the marginalization and alienation of large numbers of people who are unwilling or unable to meet the expectations of the dominant culture.

Schools, in this view, play a major role in reproducing the inequality of the capitalist mode of production. It is well documented that children from poor families and some ethnic minorities are likely to perform less well academically than children from rich families and are most likely to end up with low-status, low-paying jobs (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Clement, 1975; Curtis, et al., 1992). These children begin their school years with a distinct disadvantage. Their parents often have a limited educational background and are unable to provide the financial and academic support that other children have. The result is that children from a poor family are less likely to experience success in school than other children. Children from poor families are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol, more likely to run afoul of the law, less likely to finish high school, and more likely to end up in dead-end unskilled jobs or subsisting on social welfare (Alberta Status of Women Action Committee, 1991). These conditions are perpetuated by the legitimization of an unequal reward structure based on the concept of meritocracy. Early research noted the correspondence between the structure and social relations of the work place and that of the school. The schools in this view inculcate students with the appropriate norms and values necessary to legitimate and maintain an unequal class structure and unequal class relations (Bourdieu, 1973; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Carnoy, 1984). The reality of this situation, however, is more complex than some research seems to indicate.

Schooling And Social Class

A clear understanding of the injustice of tracking and streaming would provide insight into the reproduction of class based inequalities, the staggering waste of human potential, and the resulting structural violence that characterizes our schools and other social institutions. Students from working class and poor families are often streamed into programs that limit their opportunities, destroy self confidence, encourage behavioural problems and, for many students, result in their eventual "drop out," thus maintaining the illusion of meritocracy and fostering discrimination against those from less affluent backgrounds.

The programs into which students are tracked may vary from place to place but follow the same general pattern of vocational, general, or advanced streams of which only the advanced prepares students for university (Curtis, et al., 1991; Li, 1988). The argument is not that everyone should or even wants to go to university, but that they should not be streamed on the basis of social class, gender, or ethnicity. Students in lower tracks are marginalized and stigmatized. They know that they are in the "dumb" class and their peers and teachers act accordingly. The attitude of peers and teachers and the teacher's perception of the students is internalized by many of the youth and they either retire into a state of apathy or resist the perception and attitude through what are termed behaviour problems and attendance problems which in turn further reinforces their subordinate position and leads to students dropping out of school (Giroux, 1992).

Many youth from poor families, are streamed into these programs (Curtis, et al., 1992). They internalize the attitudes of the teachers and the status attached to their low track position. The vocational track often leads to low academic performance, "dropping out," and low-status, low-paying, dead-end jobs that frustrate and alienate the worker. This frustration and alienation is manifested in a variety of ways: low self-concept, destructive behaviours, drug and alcohol abuse, violence towards self and others, cynicism, apathy, and the various combinations. All of these reactions incur enormous social costs that must be borne by the greater society.

The above behaviours and reactions form part of the culture: the working class at best and that of a growing underclass at worst (Heisler, 1991). They are accepted and have status in their particular culture. These behaviours are a form of resistance by the youths to their subordinate position and to their lack of status and power. They represent a grab for power by the powerless. Each grab for power or attempt to resist the demands of the dominant culture solidifies the youths' place at the lower levels of the social structure. The structural violence of tracking and streaming places severe restrictions on the life choices of many students. The majority of poor and working class students remain in their class positions throughout their lives. Some, however, despite the odds, manage to experience success in the schools and mobility in the social structure (Curtis,et al., 1992) . For the few poor or working class students that manage to succeed in the school system they do so in spite of the system and the barriers that block their way rather than because of the equality of the system. In *Learning To Labour* (1977) Paul Willis' lads exemplify the way that resistance, reproduction, class, and culture operate in a complex and interactive way to reproduce the lads' subordination. The lads' resistance ensures their incorporation. The social structure is reproduced as much through the lads' resistance to the dominant ideology as through its hegemony (Willis, 1977; Apple, 1982).

Critical educators claim that the school curriculum is part of a process that prepares students for dominant or subordinate positions in society (McLaren, 1989). The curriculum is rife with contradictions. On the one hand it has the aim of developing abilities of the individuals in order to fulfil personal aspirations and make a positive contribution to society (Alberta Education, 1990) while on the other hand "guaranteeing that only a specified number of students are selected for higher levels of education" (Apple & Franklin, 1990, p. 61). The content of the curriculum favours certain forms of knowledge over others and affirms the dreams, desires, and values of select groups of students over other groups, often discriminatorily on the basis of race, class, and gender" (McLaren, 1989, p.83). Curriculum content, materials, descriptions, and representations in text books critics point out, often favour dominant groups and exclude or marginalize subordinate cultures (Apple, 1990; McLaren, 1989). There is more to curriculum, however, than course content, curricular materials, and representations in textbooks. There is the "unintended outcomes of the schooling process" (McLaren, 1989:183) that are referred to as the hidden curriculum. Schools shape students through the formal curriculum, standardized programs, and standardized examinations. They also shape students through the hidden curriculum which includes the way schools are organized, teaching and learning styles, teacher expectations, grading procedures, and the informal pedagogical practices that teachers use with specific groups of students. The formal and hidden curriculum represent forces of conformity. Students from subordinate groups must conform to the norms and values of the dominant group as represented in the formal and hidden curriculum (McLaren, 1989).

Students from the dominant culture exhibit cultural habits such as patterns of speech, dress, and behaviour that are familiar to most teachers who, for the most part, are also from the dominant group (Curtis, et al., 1992). The result is that students from the dominant culture possess the cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1973) that allows them to feel at ease with the teacher and the curriculum and those from subordinate groups are marginalized in the process (McLaren, 1989). For Bourdieu, cultural capital describes the behaviours, values, language, and meanings of particular groups.

This is not to say that schools are restricted to imposing and reproducing the dominant culture. There is more going on in schools than that. There is the dialectic between liberation and domination. Integral to this dialectic are the actions of classroom teachers who, despite systemic pressures and restraints, use the curriculum to promote a democratic classroom where education can be a tool to illuminate reality and empower students to critically analyze the issues and assumptions that underlie the dominant culture.

These issues and assumptions are imbedded in the standardized curriculum and dominant pedagogy which Paulo Freire terms "banking education." In banking education the teacher (the one in authority) has all the knowledge and deposits bits of it in the students' memory banks. The students, in turn, withdraw from their memory banks the bits of information that they need to pass exams. This method of education, while suitable for passing on selected bodies of knowledge, is based on the cultural hegemony of the dominant group. While schools do not simply reproduce the dominant culture, they establish the conditions which legitimize established bodies of knowledge, norms, and values and in the process they devalue others. This process often silences the voices of the poor, of women, and members of ethnic minorities (Giroux and McLaren,1987).

Educators must counter this subordination with a pedagogy that acknowledges the experiences and reality of those traditionally seen as subordinate. But more than that, through dialogue and critical understanding of the ways in which society works at a national and global level, teachers and students can become agents of social change. Students, through dialogue and participation can become active participants in the process of discovering and creating a new reality (Shore & Freire, 1987). This is not just a view of education through rose-coloured glasses. It does not guarantee that resistance, "drop outs," and structural violence will disappear. But it can aid in developing a pedagogy that is sensitive to the social-cultural reality of students from subordinate groups, a pedagogy that recognizes but does not promote a "blame the victim" mentality.

Schooling And Gender

Different educational experiences, whether they are as blatant as tracking or as subtle as the under-representation of women in mathematics and science courses, result in women being tracked into programs that tie directly into the segregated labour market and low paying feminized occupations. The participation of women in the labour market is not spread evenly across the spectrum of occupations. Women are concentrated in feminized occupations such as teaching and nursing. In schools, for example, women account for 72 per cent of Canada's elementary teachers, 35 per cent of all secondary teachers, and a mere 17 per cent of university teachers. Furthermore, the employment of women as high school principals in Canada does not exceed 12 per cent (The Globe And Mail. May 5, 1990: A6). Women are often channelled into low-paying, low-status, "non professional, clerical, sales, and service occupations" (Gaskell, McLaren, Novogrodsky, 1989, p. 25). The foundation for this gender segregation is built in the schools and in the programs that young women are encouraged to take. Many feminist writers argue that women are discouraged from taking mathematics and science courses. This form of tracking is not always overt. It is often the result of social pressures, teacher expectations and attitudes, the portrayal of women in text books, the absence of role models, and many other factors (Gaskel, McLaren, & Mackie, 1991; Novogrodsky, 1989).

Feminist energies and efforts at consciousness raising have contributed to improving the situation for women in schools. In 1970 the Royal Commission on the Status of Women and the feminist critique of education produced significant changes in the attitudes towards "gender stereotyping in curricula and textbooks; teachers' sex typed treatment of girls and boys; girls' fear of mathematics..." and other important areas (Mackie, 1991, p. 158). Since the 1970s, many teachers have realized the structural inequality in education and actively work towards gender equality. While these changes represent significant improvement, there is still much to be done.

Schooling And Ethnicity

Despite the ideology of meritocracy which holds that those with the greatest ability will be the most successful the transfer of social and economic position from generation to generation takes place through unequal educational opportunities (Curtis, et al., 1992; Li, 1988:75; Young, 1990). The ethnic background of students is a strong indicator of whether or not they will acquire a university degree (Li, 1988).

There is a complex array of factors which account for the various levels of educational attainment among ethnic groups. The school system and the perceptions of teachers are among the factors that exert important influences on students' educational plans and level of success. Historically, as we have seen, immigration policies played a significant part in establishing the occupational and hence the socio-economic status of immigrant families. Those from a working class background, which accounted for many southern Europeans, experienced consistent low levels of academic success generation after generation (Li, 1988). They are streamed into less advanced school programs, have a higher drop out rate, and poorer employment opportunities (Curtis,et al., 1992).

However, there have been significant changes in the historical pattern and more recent selective immigration policies have altered the historical pattern. Historically, Chinese workers bore the brunt of racist immigration policies. Despite this historical racism, those with a Chinese background scored the second highest percentage of ethnic groups having completed university. This seeming contradiction can be explained by the fact that most Chinese people in the study were foreign born. Their families immigrated to Canada under selective immigration policies and were selected because of their previous professional and technical training (Li, 1988, p. 79).

Many other ethnic minorities experience lower than average success in schools and are over-represented in the non-academic tracks of our school systems. Streaming practices that discourage some ethnic minorities from experiencing academic success are structurally violent and can result in social and economic consequences that must be borne by all members of society.

Unemployment and poverty can drive people to crime. According to York, (1990, p. 146} in Saskatchewan, a native youth who turned 16 in 1976 had a 70 per cent chance of being thrown in jail by the time he reached the age of 25. Arrested by white policemen, tried by white judges, defended by white lawyers, and detained by white jail guards, some native youth fall victim to state racism.

Racism can exist on several levels. "Personal racism is that which exists on the level of prejudice in interpersonal relationships. Institutional racism can exist in the policies and practices of agencies and organizations... . [and] state racism is built into the mechanisms and policies of the state" (Sarup, 1986, p. 11). The existence of structural racism in Canadian society does not often find its way into classroom discussions, curricular materials, or approved textbooks. In its place teachers have multicultural education.

The policy of multiculturalism has failed to combat racism and the resultant inequality. Multicultural education does not address structural racism. Instead multiculturalism allows Canadians to live under an umbrella of "tolerance and understanding" without questioning the structures of society (Li, 1988). In the multicultural view, racism is seen "as a set of mental prejudices held by a small number of unenlightened white people. This rationalization allows one to deny the structural aspects of racism both in society and in the education system" (Sarup, 1991, p. 31).

Sarup's (1991) analysis of racism is taken one step further to include international racism. Examples of international racism would include the exploitation that takes place in Mexico's ***malquiladoras*** and the industrial activity of the newly industrialized countries. In international racism, the focus is on the mobility of capital. The result is the exploitation of workers and the oppression of the poor. This exploitation is supported by state policies and the practices of transnational corporations.

Multicultural education does not question these levels of racism. Anti-racist education, on the other hand, questions the structures of racism in society and focuses on changing educational and social structures (Sarup, 1991). In the liberal view, these problems can be addressed by providing schools with the supplies, personnel, and public support that will allow the schools to reach their potential of promoting individual development and social equality. The needs of subordinate groups (the disadvantaged), in the liberal view, can be addressed by programs such as Head Start while the problems of racism can be addressed through multiculturalism and multicultural education. These programs are not damaging imthemselves, however, when they are held to be the answer to problems of inequality and racism these programs can act as smoke screens which blur the social roots of these problems. The roots of racism and structural violence run deep in Canadian society. They have devastating consequences for subordinate groups and are not addressed by multiculturalism nor by programs such as Head Start. In Alberta the effects of structural violence are most visible among aboriginal people. Radical educators would argue that these problems will only be addressed by fundamental changes in social and educational structures.

Schooling, Structural Violence, And Aboriginal People

Colonialism, cultural violence, and residential schools took their toll on Canada's Native people. This destructive pattern set in place a cycle that repeated itself generation after generation and only began to change in the 1960s. Most of the children from the residential schools left the schools not equipped to enter the dominant society and alienated from Native society. The resulting marginalization and alienation created in most a state of apathy that promoted drug and alcohol addiction and made life, for many Native people, full of pain and desperation. Native people are disproportionately represented in Canada's jails. In Alberta, for example, Native people account for 5 percent of the total population yet represent 20 to 30 per cent of the population in the province's jails (York,1990). Young Natives under the age of 25 have a suicide rate that is six times the national average (York, 1990). The federal task force Justice On Trial calculated the overall suicide rate among Alberta's aboriginal people as five times the national average

(Cawsey, 1991). In 1989 Native youth accounted for 34.9 per cent of the young offenders (12-17) admitted to Alberta young offender facilities (Cawsey, 1991). Many Native youth, 37 per cent, end their academic career in junior high school. This compares with 17 per cent for the non-Native population (Hagey, 1989). The Cawsey Task Force found that Aboriginal youth are faced with an uphill battle from the start. Members of the Task Force reported that:

> Young Aboriginal people are faced with a range of almost insurmountable problems. These problems include a lack of educational opportunities; a lack of employment opportunities; extremely poor living and housing conditions; family breakdown; physical and sexual abuse, and alcohol and drug abuse; and a generally recognized cultural identity problem resulting from a host of historical conditions forced on the Aboriginal people (Cawsey, 1991 pp. 1-6).

The task force went on to state the need for programs that target Aboriginal youth and focus on the treatment of drug and alcohol problems experienced by youth and families (Cawsey, 1991). One wonders what effect treatment programs can have when many Aboriginal people are faced with systemic structural inequality, generations of dysfunction, and a long history of social oppression.

Victims of subtle racism in schools and other social institutions, many Native people are left lacking the psychological, academic, and financial resources to deal with day-to-day life in mainstream society (Hagey, et al., 1989). Victimized by hostile social structures, many native people are forced to live life on the margins of an affluent society. Having internalized a negative self-concept, they turn to drugs and alcohol to counteract feelings of inadequacy and powerlessness (Hodgson, 1990). Powerless, they grab for power. The need for power turns into direct violence committed against individuals, families, and other members of society. The authorities are called to deal with the situation and jail for the offender is the result. The pattern is thereby reinforced and repeats itself over and over until sickness, death, or loss of spirit takes its toll. Similar conclusions have been reached by Willis (1976) and Cawsey (1991) who refer to the grab for power as lashing out at the system because of anger. When issues of inequality, class, gender, ethnicity, schooling, and tracking create systemic inequality, structural violence is the unavoidable result.

Structural Violence In The North: A Summary

The reality of structural violence plays itself out in the cities of North America on a daily basis. When people in these cities are frustrated by their social circumstances, and limited by structural conditions, their human potential is blocked. Many of these people struggle to resist the conditions of their existence and finally, through their resistance, fall deeper into the trap of their social environment. Because of their social circumstances, many people from the lower levels of the social economic structure barely exist amidst a sea of affluence. But it is affluence for some and minimum social assistance supplemented by once-a-month allotments from the food bank for others. Social assistance and food banks provide enough resources to keep people alive, enough to prevent major uprisings, but take a devastating toll on human dignity. The toll on one's self-worth is destructive. It undermines self-confidence, destroys any sense of self-esteem, and eventually becomes psychologically debilitating. For most people this is a process that begins very early. When one is born into the social circumstances that I have described, it is not until the teenage or later years that the social contradictions become apparent. And then, for most, it is too late. Chances for an education have been thwarted by the social environment or restricted by practices of streaming and tracking. Social habits, dress, speech, manners, cultural tastes, and a lack of self-worth are compensated for by a penchant for violence that is a response to a position of powerlessness and marginalization. This sense of difference makes it uncomfortable to venture out of familiar social circles that are destructive and serve to perpetuate destructive social patterns.

Despite the urgency of this problem, little has been done to study the day-to-day lives of youth caught in this web of structural violence. Willis' (1977) classic study focused on working class youth in inner city London. Walker's more recent (1988) study focused on working class youth in Australia. Tanner (1990) studied the attitudes and behaviours of middle and working class high school drop-outs in Edmonton. There is, however, very little research available that focuses on the day-to-day lives of inner city or street youth.

There are a variety of remedial or alternative school programs offered to inner city youth in the Edmonton area that attempt to accommodate the educational needs of this population. The young people that attend these schools are often labelled as *youth at risk* or *street kids*. Most of these alternative school programs are intended to integrate youth back into a traditional school setting. The logic of this practice is reminiscent of a "blame the victim" approach to solving social problems. One must, from within this view, assume that the difficulties these young people faced in the traditional school setting were entirely of their own making, their own fault. While in some cases this might very well be true, in many cases it is not.

This is not to say that youth workers and teachers working in these programs are acting as undercover government agents out to bend the will of rebellious youth to the needs of the state. I do think, however, that some youth in these programs are damaged by this approach and that the practice of attempting to integrate many of these youth back into a traditional school setting is not the answer. The problems related to this approach are not always obvious. Many youth want to learn, want to complete high school, and many want to go on to post-secondary studies. But they often become frustrated by the correspondence-based pedagogy offered by most of Edmonton's alternative schools. For many of the students that these schools serve, reading and comprehension are typically weak areas, not due to lack of ability but to lack of experience. The correspondence-based program of studies that most of these schools must offer students depends on the students' ability to read and comprehend, an ability that many students have not fully developed. Most alternative schools are understaffed and underfunded. The students are studying at a variety of levels, do not attend regularly, and the self-directed nature of correspondence-based studies seems, for many, to be the only solution. However, failure and frustration can aggravate many students' problems of perceived inferiority and encourage them to take the familiar route of "dropping out" and returning to a life they had hoped to leave behind.

Most social service agencies, some of which have alternative schools as part of their programming, attempt to understand and address these complex issues. Perhaps this example taken from the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission's (AADAC) compilation of strategies for working with high-risk youth is among the most straight- forward. They write,

> High risk youth tend to be among the heaviest users of alcohol and other drugs ... . Still we know less about this population because commonly used information gathering techniques fail to capture information on these people (AADAC, 1993, p.24).

The authors recognize that the issues faced by what are termed *high risk youth* are more than problems attributed to individual characteristics. "They are the results of poverty, racial discrimination, and long term unemployment" (AADAC, 1993, p. 24). Yet despite this recognition, programs designed by experts and intended to address the needs of this population proliferate. The title of AADAC's (1993) compilation How Do I Fit? is itself a contradiction and is not in harmony with the previous statements. The question "How do I fit?" implies that I need to find my place, that I am in fact a misfit and responsible for not fitting. This approach does not consider the structural nature of some problems. It echoes a "blame the victim" mentality that rationalizes the inequities in Canada's social system through the lens of meritocracy. According to the principles of meritocracy, the most able individuals undergo the necessary training for a hierarchy of vocational roles and, based on their own merit, assume their places in the social structure. The ideology of meritocracy obscures systemic inequalities and is a dominant theme in Canada's social institutions such as schools, government bureaucracy, factories, and offices

-a structure, critics would argue, that was originally responsible for their marginalization (Apple, 1982; Giroux, and McLaren, 1987; McLaren, 1989).

For example, of the eight "Educational Alternatives" for youth at risk offered in the central Edmonton area, six are intended to integrate youth back into the formal education system or to provide an alternative "delivery method" such as a correspondence-based program. Terra, the seventh of these of these programs is unique in that it offers a senior high school program for pregnant or parenting teens (*Educational Alternatives*, 1993; Second Chance for Youth, 1991). It is no surprise that remedial programs such as these focus on integration into the public system. Schools, Freire (1987) argues, are designed to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system. The eighth of these programs, Inner City High School, offers a program tailored to needs identified by inner city youth. Inner City High School forms part of this study.

Inner City High School grew out of Inner City Drama's popular theatre-based drama programs with inner city youth. In these programs, the youth, after dealing with their own issues, achieved a degree of stability in their lives and began to identify their own developmental needs. Completing high school was at the top of the list. To accommodate this development, when some of the youth registered in local high schools a tutoring program was established in the office. Two months later, despite the remedial help, the youth began to drop out of high school again. The reasons for dropping out ranged from subtle racism, the practice of tracking, general teacher attitude, to differences in life experiences and maturity level between themselves and many of their peers and the temptations of the drug-based subculture that is part of many schools. However, before I discuss Inner City High School and how it grew out of Inner City Drama's popular-theatre based drama programming, it is necessary to set the stage.

CHAPTER III
POPULAR THEATRE

Introduction

Popular theatre theory and practice are integral to this research project. An understanding of popular theatre and its adaptation to the needs of Edmonton's inner city youth is essential to understanding the development of this project. Popular theatre is theatre made by and/or for and/or with members of a particular community about issues that are important to their community. Part of the popular theatre process involves a dialogical relationship between the popular theatre group and the audience. The popular theatre process--community members coming together to explore and analyze social issues identified by the participants--is most important. This process does not necessarily include public performance. It should, however, lead participants to the point where they are empowered to question and search for solutions to the social environment that is responsible for the issues of their concern.

In the following chapter I will briefly point out the fundamental difference between drama-in-education and popular theatre, give a brief overview of popular education and its relationship to popular theatre, review the historical development of popular theatre, and discuss its relationship to popular education. The chapter will conclude with a discussion on the use of popular theatre in the context of this project.

Drama In Education

At this point it is important that the reader have a clear understanding of the philosophy and methodology of popular theatre and how it differs from other drama-based approaches such as drama-in-education (DIE). The philosophy that underlies most drama-in-education, "to develop the child from within through creative self-expression," (Johnson & O'Neill, 1989, pp. 42-43), is similar to the philosophy that underpinned early Inner City Drama children's programming. The teacher in a drama-in-education project works from within the group to lead the group's activities. Dorthy Heathcote, one of drama-in-education's foremost practitioners, leads the group by taking a role in the production, by direct intervention in the students' reality (Bolton, 1989). In other DIE projects the focus may be on putting children through an experience in which participants have some degree of autonomy. Drama-in-education practitioners such as Bolton are concerned with using drama for cognitive development and guiding students through a role in which the teacher takes an active part in the drama (Bolton, 1989). The facilitator in a popular theatre project, however, does her or his best not to intervene in the group's reality and attempts to help create the conditions that allow the group to identify the elements of their reality that they would like to explore.

The youth in Inner City's popular theatre-based drama programs create a safe environment built on peaceful relationships, an environment where critical awareness can begin. Through this process, the young people become empowered to respond to the concrete realities of their world. This critical awareness is possible when the youth become aware of and confident in their own intelligence. They are then able to apply that intelligence to an analysis of their own reality. Popular theatre is the vehicle that they use in this process. However, before I discuss Inner City's particular context-based interpretation of popular theatre theory and practice, I will discuss the theory and practice of popular education and the influence of Paulo Freire.

Popular Education

Popular education as it is generally understood traces its roots to Brazil of the 1960s and the literacy programs of Paulo Freire. The Freirian process, whereby students learn to read and write by discussing problems they are experiencing such as poverty and landlessness, focused on action for change. The process of action, reflection, action, (praxis) leads to *conscientization*.

Conscientization leads students to arrive at a critical understanding of their reality. With a critical awareness of their own situation and "a deepened consciousness," people who have previously been unaware of the historical reality of their own situation realize that reality is "susceptible of transformation" (Freire, 1987 p. 73).

Popular education is action for education and change. It involves the exploited and marginalized sectors of society in collectively acting to analyze their experience (theory) and their situation (practice). The relationship between theory and practice is dialectical and ongoing. It is dialectical in the sense that it starts with the experience of the people, empowers them to engage in the critical analysis of their experience, and act collectively to change their situation. The "relationship between practice/theory/practice is intimate and ongoing" (Arnold, Barndt, & Burke, n.d.).

Transformation is at the root of popular education theory and practice. Popular education is based on the assumption that the present political and economic system is unjust and excludes the vast majority of people from meaningful participation and decision-making power in society (Gatt-Fly, 1983).

For popular educators (Arnold & Burke, 1983; Arnold, Burke, James, Martin, and Thomas, 1991; Barndt, 1990) and other critics, traditional education systems, based on liberal or conservative assumptions, maintain and legitimize the inequality of the present system (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Clement, 1975; Curtis, et al., 1992).

Popular education is education for and by the poor and marginalized people of South and North countries (Gatt-Fly, 1983; Barndt, 1989). Popular education is participatory, ongoing, and collective. The starting point for popular educators is in the concrete experience of the learner. It is here that analysis begins, with the daily experiences of people's lives. When participants are placed at the centre of a description of the world and empowered to look critically at their world, they become actors capable of creating their own history, of acting to change the conditions of their situations (Gatt-Fly, 1983; Freire, 1987). Inspired by this Freirian assumption, grass roots organizations in the South and the North embarked upon education programs (Arnold & Burke, 1983; Barndt, 1990).

In the late 1960s in Nicaragua, for example, a conscious part of the Sandinistas' organizing strategy was to use a popular education process to build a base of support. The armed struggle of the Sandinistas was supported by the educational efforts of popular educators. The educators travelled to the countryside, the mountains, and the barrios. The process was on behalf of and began with the interests of the poor majority. It began with the daily economic reality of peasants and explored the economic and political contradictions in their lives. It was education for political conscientization (Barndt, 1990).

Popular education in Canada, while based on similar assumptions as popular education in other parts of the world, does not face the same degree of urgency as it did in Nicaragua. For example, in Toronto, The Moment Project of the Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice brings together community groups and community activists committed to working for fundamental social change. The groups gather together to do political analysis for action. Learning is participatory and begins with the participants' own experiences as the starting point for analysis. The Moment project takes up issues that are part of the Canadian political, economic, and social reality. Issues such as Free Trade, the GST, refugees, Native self-government, homelessness, racism, and the media have become the subjects of analysis (Barndt, 1993; Noorani, personal communication, April 5, 1994).

Both popular education and popular theatre focus on *conscientization* and change. Both begin with the concrete experience of the learner. Both work collectively to resist the structural violence present in their lives. Through this process both give voice to the poor and marginalized. In this project, popular theatre is the vehicle that the youth use to explore their social reality.

What is Popular Theatre?

Popular theatre is a tool for community development. The philosophy and methodology of popular theatre take on particular characteristics that grow out of their social and political contexts. There are, however, common threads that theoretically unite popular theatre projects around the world.

In most parts of the world, popular theatre is understood as a theatre of the people, theatre in which members of a community are directly involved in acting out issues which are important to themselves and their community (CTR, 1988).

Popular theatre is based on a community need, "the theatre being a response to the need for change" (Kidd & Rashid, 1984, pp. 30-31; Selman, 1987, p. 11). The need for change is manifested through the identification of community issues and their theatrical exploration. Popular theatre, also known as people's theatre and theatre for development, is theatre made for and by the community. In this way, the theatre is accepted by the community as part of its culture (Epskamp, 1989; Kidd & Rashid, 1984). The issues of popular theatre must come from and be recognized by members of the communities in which the popular theatre project/workshop is taking place.

History of Popular Theatre

Popular theatre has a long history and has been used throughout much of the world as an art form that enables ordinary people to gain insight into critical social issues. The popular theatre form, however, can also be used to reinforce patterns of domination. Kidd and Rashid comment on this possibility. They write,

> People's theatre has been one of the battle grounds in the struggle between the dominant and subordinate classes in Bengal for centuries ... . [It has served] as a means of reinforcing the domination of the ruling classes or as a tool challenging and rallying popular struggle against oppression (1984, p.35).

During the 1960s in many parts of the colonized South, popular theatre played a major role in nationalist movements. These groups used theatre to expose colonial injustice and to develop a national consciousness, which in turn fuelled national liberation movements during the decolonization era. By the end of the 1960s, popular theatre had become theatre of the people, as peasants struggled against growing class divisions, landlessness, and growing unemployment (Kidd & Rashid, 1984). In some of these struggles, popular theatre became known as theatre for development.

Theatre For Development

In the 1960s, theatre for development (TFD) projects were initiated by colonial governments, and plays were developed to tour rural areas promoting modernization. These plays dealt with topics such as health care, agriculture, and the use of pesticides. In Africa of the 1960s, this form of theatre took on a more critical edge. African university students and development workers created plays that dealt with the problems of modernization. It was not until the 1970s that the didactic character of this work began to take on a more cooperative philosophy. Theatre workers cooperated with local communities to research village issues and concerns. The plays that resulted from this process were created for and in some cases with the communities concerned (Chifunyise, 1984; Kidd, 1983a).

The stages in the evolution of theatre for development are not clear-cut nor are they separate. They can and do exist side by side even within the same area (Bappa & Etherton, 1983). This evolution is illustrated in the following summary:

1. Urban theatre groups, (playwrights, students, adult educators) tour local villages with well-made plays.

2. Development workers perform didactic plays for villages.

3. Development workers create open-ended dramas out of village-based research.
   The play is a catalyst for the discussion and search for solutions which follows.

4. Villagers become directly involved in problem analysis and drama making.

5. Theatre becomes part of a wider process of raising political consciousness.
   (Summary adapted from (Bappa & Etherton, 1983; Kidd & Rashid, 1984).

This evolution in TFD and popular theatre added a new dimension to the role of popular theatre workers/educators. They became animateurs rather than performers. Their role became one of facilitating and animating a popular theatre process of research, theatre making, and analysis. The process of analysis left room for the participants to do their own thinking, create their own drama, do their own analysis, expose contradictions, discriminate between symptoms and root causes, and propose actions to deal with the problems and issues that they identified.

The use of popular theatre for community development is not limited to

Africa. Groups in the Palestinian West Bank, India, Chile, Jamaica, the Philippines, South America, the United States, and Canada are using the power of popular theatre as a weapon in the struggle for social justice (Boal, 1985; CTR, 1988; Epskamp, 1989; Kidd & Rashid, 1984; van Erven, 1987).

Popular Theatre's Critical Edge

The critical edge of popular theatre has been honed by the influence of Brazilians Freire (1987) and Boal (1985). In Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire wrote that ordinary people, no matter how ignorant or submerged in the "culture of silence" they had become, provided with the necessary tools, were capable of looking critically at the world in a dialogical encounter with others (1987, p. 13). The Freireian methodology of codification, in which community members analyze photographs or sketches that are representations of their lives and the social reality in which they live, and the concept of *conscientization*, whereby ordinary people are enabled to identify the root causes of social problems in a particular social order, has been a major influence on the evolution of popular theatre.

Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed developed Freire's critical approach to social problems through codification of the community's reality through sketches and photographs into theatrical forms that exposed social contradictions and illustrated the domination of one class over another (Boal, 1985 p. 135-136; Freire, 1987, p. 106). The poor and marginalized, the formerly inarticulate and silent, made themselves heard through popular theatre. Kidd and Rashid write, "Rural peasants, native communities, urban workers and slum-dwellers reappropriated theatre which had been monopolized by the middle classes, and began to create their own forms of theatre closely linked to popular education, organizing and struggle" (1984, p. 34).

For Boal, Freire's description of the banking process of education, in which teacher experts deposit bits of knowledge in the minds of students and asks for withdrawals at exam time aptly described the passivity of theatre audiences. Boal's critical edge was sharpened by Freire's concept of *conscientization* and deepened by the dramaturgy of Bertold Brecht.

Brechtian theatre developed in Germany during the 1920s and 30s. It provided a method for developing a materialist critique within the theatrical medium. "Only with awareness can the spectator take his destiny into his own hands, taking action to intervene in social events outside the theatre." According to Brecht, this was the only way to change society or to intervene in social reality (Brecht, cited in Epskamp, 1989, pp. 49-50).

For Brecht, the theatre of his day had become an elite institution and placed profits above the two elements he argued were essential for theatre:

1. The drama ought to be a realistic portrayal of current reality.
2. It must communicate insights into that reality (Epskamp, 1989, p. 47)

These two elements, together with the Freireian concepts of *conscientization* and *praxis* (reflection, action, reflection) form the philosophical base of popular theatre projects in many parts of the world. Canadian approaches to popular theatre have followed a pattern of development similar to popular theatre in other parts of the world.

Popular Theatre in Canada

The roots of popular theatre in Canada can be traced to the workers' theatre movements of the early 1930s and into through the collectives of the 1970s (Barnet, 1987; Filewod, 1987; Welton, 1987). In Canada, the collective creations of the 1970s were similar in many ways to popular theatre projects in other parts of the world. They focused on the issues of specific communities and in some cases, on the need to animate groups to take action for change, and on social and political analysis (Barnet, 1987; Brooks, 1983). The following five steps compare to the five steps listed in the evolution of theatre for development:

1. Community docu-drama
2. Theatre as a tool for community development
3. Theatre as a tool for raising political awareness
4. Theatre as a means for remedial education
5. Popular theatre as a tool for conscientization and community organization (Kidd, 1983:3)

Community Docu-Drama

Community docu-drama revolves around the concerns of particular communities and involves community research, collective production, and community feed back. Professional theatre workers/actors live in a community long enough to learn about community issues and then collectively create a play based on what they have learned and perform it for, and enter into dialogue with, that particular community (Filewod, 1987, p.p. 24-25; Brooks, 1983).

Community Development

Theatre for community development is often focussed on a single community issue. Theatre is used to focus attention on the issue and as a catalyst for discussion, analysis and action. Typically, theatre of this type is created to deal with issues such as unemployment, alcohol use, and community mobilization. The theatre is often performed in venues that are accessible to community members such as community halls, and other community venues (Kidd, 1979; AADAC, 1990).

Raising Political Awareness

The use of theatre to raise political awareness involves using theatre to popularize political issues. Issues such as environmental problems, unfair or exploitative labour practices, the Gulf War, and other political issues often deemed too complex for ordinary people to understand form the content of theatre for political awareness. The theatre can demystify complex political issues.

Remedial Education

The focus of this form of popular theatre is on problems facing individuals rather than broad social issues. Theatre of this type--for and with the people--has been used to address problems such as illiteracy, substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, rape, and other forms of violence (Kidd, 1979; McLean, personal communication, 1992). The theatre is a catalyst for discussion. The discussion period can be catalyzed by a variety of techniques such as interviews of actors in character and by running scenes again and inviting audience participation.

Conscientization And Community Organization

This form of popular theatre is often identified with an ongoing struggle or educational campaign. It explores issues, provokes discussion, and promotes solidarity. The theatre is often performed for an audience that is intimately connected to the reality that is illustrated on the stage (Kidd, 1979). This form of popular theatre is also performed by and for the people without spectators. For the participants, the play becomes a dramatic means to explore reality, to evaluate the forces conditioning their lives and to respond in an active way (Kidd, 1979; Lambert, 1982). This process, Kidd points out, will only work as a medium for social transformation when it is part of an on-going process of critical analysis organization and struggle (Kidd. 1979).

The Popular Theatre Process: A Summary

The marginalized and oppressed, rural peasants, native communities, urban workers, and slum dwellers, use theatre, an art form that is traditionally associated with the elite and middle classes, to break from the "culture of silence;" to articulate their concerns; and to analyze social, political, and economic issues. The popular theatre process, as this chapter has shown, is based on the following principles that I understand to be common threads that run through most popular theatre projects:

1. Actors (participants) and audience are usually in their own environment/community.
2. Groups usually form around an issue/problem or community issues/problems.
3. Performances or workshops deal with immediate social problems existing among actors and audience. Connections to social forces in the community may also be made.
4. Plays and workshops are based on a collective process.
5. Knowledge created is formed through critical awareness of social, political, and economic issues.

6. . Knowledge created may also be a form of interactive knowledge (Park, Brydon-Miller, Hall, and Jackson, 1993). Interactive knowledge is created through peaceful relationships. The introduction of values such as trust, respect, cooperation, and solidarity into previously hostile relationships and environments is based on interactive knowledge.

When communities begin to create their own knowledge, their own forms of theatre to deal with community issues, issues involving social, economic, and political analysis, the process of *conscientization* has begun.

Popular Theatre And Inner City Youth

For the youth in this project, popular theatre performs the two functions that Brecht identified as being essential to theatre. The drama is a realistic portrayal of their current reality and it communicates insights into that reality.

However, at Inner City, helping the youth to understand the roots of their oppression is not an immediate concern. What popular theatre does is to shine light in the dark corners, to speak the unspoken and to give voice to the voiceless.

Recently, in Canada, Forum Theatre has become a dominant form used in popular theatre work. At Inner City, despite the value of Forum Theatre, we decided to continue working in a collective process. Thway of working gave the youth control over the form and content of their work. This sense of control over the popular theatre process became important to the youth as they struggled to gain control over their lives. I also had nagging questions about the Forum Theatre method. For example, do facilitators or "spect-actors"--Boal's term for audience members who are invited to try out solutions to problems that are explored through forum theatre--(Schutzman and Jan Cohen-Cruz, 1994:1) have the right to intervene in the youth's reality? The problems that the youth face are powered by deep psychological and social issues that have roots which can be traced to the structural violence of the colonial process. Most of the youth, as we have seen, are fighting addictions, lack of a formal education, and the scars of abuse. Some are living in abusive or violent situations when they first come to us. I do not presume to have the right to practice popular theatre with the intent of exposing the youth to proposed solutions to the violence of their lives. The solutions may be proposed with the best of intentions. They may be from well-meaning facilitators or audience members; however, the solutions proposed may not be based on a deep understanding of the issues that the youth face. In that sense, proposed solutions could be superficial and in fact may cause harm to the youth. For example, someone could be advised to leave her/his abusive home. Do I have the right to create a situation where through popular theatre the youth are advised to leave home? This situation is not as straightforward as it may seem. As this study will reveal, many youth were abused after being removed from a violent or abusive home. They love their parents regardless of the colour of their lives. Would it be helpful for me to tell them or lead a discussion which points out that their families are bad? At Inner City we came to the realization that if our program was to have integrity, we were not only responsible to help create an environment in which the youth not only felt safe but one in which they were treated with respect. Once this began to happen, the group members were able to identify their own developmental needs. This placed us in a difficult spot. If we helped to create the environment in which the youth identified their own developmental needs then we were also responsible to do our best to assemble the necessary resources for that development. If not, we concluded, then we had no business messing around with their environment. This trail led us from drama programs for children, into popular theatre programs for teenagers (13-19), then to community performances for which we charged a fee that was used to pay the youth a wage. The trail continued through rented rooms for homeless group members, into a housing program, to counselling by professionals when the youth requested, and into Inner City High School, created at the request of some of the group members. The youth led us through the popular theatre process. It was a challenge for me to keep up. After working in our small group and creating scenes with their peers the youth decided that they wanted to take their story, in popular theatre form, out to the greater community. It is this journey that is the subject of Chapters IV through VII. However, before I conclude this chapter, it is important that I discuss the notion of solutions and *conscientization* as it applies to the youth in this project.

Conscientization does take place, but it is a long-term process. One must keep in mind that youth are involved. History is changed slowly. These young people change their own history in subtle ways that do not often include immediate political action or what could be perceived as an immediate solution. In this context, popular theatre is an important part of the *conscientization* project. *Conscientization,* as I understand it, describes a process whereby participants engage in action to transform their situation (Freire, 1987; Park,et al., 1993). This transformation involves the emergence of a critical consciousness. Like a midwife, the facilitator creates a safe environment where peaceful relationships can be built and an analysis of the group's social reality can take place (Cox,1986). This process is built on dialogue and the truth--the reality of a situation--is emergent, holistic, and based on the insights and perceptions of individuals as they struggle to come to terms with their environment. In most cases, the situations that the youth illustrate are drawn from their direct experience. At Inner City we do not feel that the facilitator has the right to analyze the conditions of a group member's life. To intervene in their social reality would be like using popular theatre to show youth the oppressive conditions of their lives. Inner City group members are not, as Kemmis and McTaggart put it , "the objects of someone's plans for change" (1982, p. 44). Popular theatre for Inner City then, is closely related to the collective documentary process and, in some cases, has become a powerful force in the long-term project of *conscientization.*

Summary

The Inner City program is rooted in hope and in turn draws out the hope in others, hope that provides group members with a bridge between analysis and transformation. The drama is not finished and every act follows a format similar to the action research spiral:

> It starts with small cycles of research, planning, acting and reflecting. It involves small groups of collaborators, and in some cases [performances for example] widens to include the greater community cooperating in search of ways to respond to difficult social situations

(Kemmis and McTaggart, 1982, pp. 24-25).

The cycles of planning, acting, reflecting, then reconsidering the plan and revising the action accurately describe the development of the popular theatre process in most Inner City programs. The cycle is purposeful and, like action research, "conscious and deliberate, a characteristic that leads to strategic action" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1982, pp. 24-25). But more than that, it creates an open environment where the youth, by means of popular theatre, participate in their own research. In this form of participatory research, community members decide on the issue to be explored (Mtonga, 1986; Park, et al., 1993). The youth identify what they need in their process of development, and Inner City attempts to provide the tools. The project is led by the youth and not by the agenda or research questions of the facilitator. Before becoming involved with Inner City, the youth did not see themselves as a collective. Through the development of this project and the participatory method of research involved, the group of young people began to work as a collective; the knowledge generated is interactive and for some proceeds slowly to critical awareness.

In the next and subsequent chapters I will discuss the development of this project and the realities of structural violence as it impacts on the lives of the youth as they struggle to overcome the problems associated with that violence. The struggle is made manifest through the use of popular theatre.

CHAPTER IV

INNER CITY DRAMA AND CREATIVE SELF-EXPRESSION

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the first few years of the Inner City Drama Association. In this period my volunteer work with children in Edmonton's inner city community took a dramatic turn. What began as a personal need to overcome shyness and an inability to express myself in front of groups led to a realization that drama could be a powerful tool for working with inner city youth and to the creation of the Inner City Drama Association (ICDA). The period is marked by my own naivete and the over-simplification of complex social issues.

What I Discovered In Drama 347

I decided to take a drama course towards the end of my 3rd year of a 4-year Bachelor of Education program. How, I thought, could I become a good teacher when I was uncomfortable in seminars and other group situations? The University of Alberta's Bachelor of Education Program was grounded in lecture-based instruction that did not, for the most part, facilitate the development of seminar and group-based pedagogical processes. This fact contributed to my personal feelings of inadequacy and, in my opinion, represented a hole in my teacher education. Drama 347 was offered that summer. For me, taking the course was like jumping in the deep end and hoping to swim.

Summer drama courses were compressed into daily classes over a 3-week semester. The course was intense. Some students bloomed; others had difficulty. Coming to terms with my own feelings as I worked through the course and observing its effect on other students convinced me of the power and potential of drama as a tool for working with inner city youth. Towards the end of that summer of 1986, enthusiastic about my discovery and with the idea of beginning a drama program at the McCauley Boys' and Girls' Club, an inner city youth agency where I worked as a volunteer, I contacted several theatre companies with the idea of sharing my discovery and contacting an instructor.

Most theatre companies, however, had already discovered the power and potential of drama and were not particularly interested in working with inner city youth. They offered encouragement but could offer no concrete support. Then I noticed a poster with the caption "Social Action Theatre" by Catalyst Theatre. I called Catalyst and they referred me to Inner City's first instructor, Lorna Thomas.

Next, with Lorna's help, I secured funding for a pilot program. The program began and I sat back thinking that I had struck a blow for social justice. This feeling of doing good was not to last. I soon realized that if the program was to continue, then I would have to work at it. Sitting back reflecting on my good work was not enough.

Inner City Children And Creative Self-expression

The first program was encouraging. The children (6-12 years) responded positively and warmly. Many came out of their shells and began to express themselves through drama in constructive and creative ways. This was in sharp contrast to the usual destructive and aggressive acting out. The next year the program expanded to include Alex Taylor School, an inner city community school. These early programs focused on prevention through creative self-expression. I knew from my own experience that a street survival skill is to close yourself off, not to make yourself vulnerable. Children growing up in inner city environments learn very early that it can be dangerous to acknowledge your feelings, to make yourself vulnerable and open yourself to more hurt. They often build a protective shell around themselves, a shell that gets thicker with age. While this strategy is valuable as a street survival skill, it retards healthy development. Feelings and emotions can only stay bottled up for so long before they erupt in violent and disruptive ways. This much I knew from my own experiences and from being a volunteer youth worker in Edmonton's inner city community. Drama, I was convinced, would provide an outlet for creative expression and in the process build self-confidence and enhance self-esteem. What I did not know but was to discover later was that many of the children and youth I worked with had lived with some form of abuse, abuse that ranged from sexual to physical and most often included substance abuse.

What Happened In The Early Children's Programs?

Both the McCauley Boys' and Girls' Club and Alex Taylor School programs consisted of a series of 20, one to 1-1/2 hour drama meetings with 10-15 children between the ages of 6 and 12. The success of the project has always been difficult to put in quantitative terms. However, in the early programs, group members who were withdrawn and shy at the beginning of the program became comfortable expressing themselves dramatically and taking part in the circles that marked the beginning and end of each session.

Stories in the children's programs often involve gold rings, magic frogs, and other flights of fancy. Characters from the popular culture more often than not find their way into these programs. These components of the children's programs are very important and can form the basis of social analysis. Questions such as Why does she do that? Who does it help? What else could she have done? can counter blind acceptance of the popular culture.

The first step in the children's program is to use drama games and exercises to build trust, respect, and cooperation. This can, at times, be a formidable task and certainly not achievable by everyone. The games and exercises do, however, build self-confidence and enhance self-esteem. Children learn to express themselves in constructive ways, they learn to cooperate with each other in group settings and they learn to experience the creativity within themselves. The following comments recorded in the *Inner City Drama Final Report* (1987) give some indication of the effect that the children's drama programs had on the young participants.

On the process,

> My two boys really enjoy drama. All they can talk about is what they were--lions or tigers--or what they've been making--puppets or masks. The puppets they've just made have them really excited. (A parent)

After a field trip to see a play young April commented,

> I really enjoyed going to the play at Ben Calf Robe School.The actors were all native teenagers. I'm Cree, you know.

Many of the children in these programs gained the confidence needed for the further exploration of social issues.

In the drama programs it became a ritual to begin and end each session with a circle. The circle promotes equality: everyone in the circle is on the same level and each person has an equal opportunity to speak. Daily plans, special events, and the whereabouts of other group members are discussed in the opening circle. In the closing circle group members are encouraged to evaluate and discuss the events of the day's program. The circle encouraged participation, promoted the sharing of experiences, and quickly became a safe and familiar part of Inner City Drama meetings. For this process to take place, the facilitator must facilitate and not dominate the group meetings. If the process is dominated by the facilitator then the circle is corrupted and the youths' stories will lack the substance and integrity that they otherwise might have. It is the facilitator's responsibility to use his or her skills to create a safe and respectful environment where group members are comfortable sharing the stories of their lives. A typical meeting would follow a pattern similar to this example taken from an early Boys' and Girls' Club session plan.

The session began as usual with the opening circle and proceeded in the following way.

Open Circle

- -Greetings / enquire as to the whereabouts of missing group members
- -General discussion of topics of interest
- -Discuss the day's plan with the group and ask for suggestions and approval

Warm Up

- -Slow motion race, last one wins players must keep moving and legs should be lifted to the knees

Exercises

- -Bus Stop
    - -Everyone picks a number
    - -The number that is chosen becomes the player's age

-Then break into groups of three or four

-A bench or three chairs becomes a bus stop

-In turn, each group leaves the room and then re-enters one at a time acting the age indicated on their ticket

-Once each member of a group of three or four is at the bus stop, the characters begin to interact in the way that they think would be typical of their characters

-As previously arranged, the facilitator calls out "The bus isn't coming"

-In turn, each group member leaves the room acting her/his assigned age

-After the bus stop is clear, the group returns and the other group members who form the audience try to guess their ages

This exercise is a confidence builder and is usually filled with fun and laughter.

Group Improvisation / Magic Room

-Group members turn the drama room into whatever room or place that they choose

-Question: If this room could become any place you choose, which place would it be? (Boys' and Girls' Club, Mar. 7, 1989)

Choices have included such places as a hospital, police station, construction site, and bar. Often, a series of individual situations from the magic room are put together. The group makes choices about content and creates a story. This particular story involved some construction workers who went to the bar after work, got into a fight, the police were called, and some of the combatants were sent to the hospital. (Boys' and Girls' Club, May 30, 1991)

Closing Circle

-Discussion of the meeting: exercises, magic room

-Did the magic room seem real?

-Can they be taken further next time?
-Snack is shared with group members
-Rides home

Occasionally, exercises such as the magic room and story circles--where the group sits in a circle and spontaneously tells a story one word or phrase at a time--can lead the group to identify and analyze issues and topics that are important in their lives. Later the practice of putting individual stories together can be used to construct scenes and may lead to explorations such as April's story.

April's Story

In the second year of the Boys' and Girls' Club program 11-year-old April, one of the drama group members, told the members of her group about a crisis in her home:

Her father had gone out drinking the night before and spent money that was needed for gas to get the mother to work. The next morning April's mother gave the father an ultimatum: either return the money or take your things and leave. The children cried. April ran to her room to get her babysitting money and offered it to her father in the hope that her father would not have to leave. Mother did not relent and April's father left the house.

After telling this story to the drama group, April and the other members of the group decided to dramatize the incident. April played the part of her mother. April's father and brothers and sisters were played by other group members.

What follows is a transcription of a video that was made of the dramatization entitled *Facts Of Life* (March, 1988).

The play opens at the breakfast table. Father is reading the paper while the children are scurrying about preparing for school. Mother is almost ready to leave for work. The children leave for school. Mother turns to father and says:

Mother: Oh honey, can you go and sharpen the skates?
Father: Sure, I'll go and sharpen them today.
Narrator: Everyone leaves for school.
All the kids: Bye mom, see you after school.

Narrator: Now it is after school and everyone is at the supper table. [The kids get up one by one to comment on their life].

[The comments by the kids seem out of place in relation to the story that is unfolding. If a production was the goal of this project, editing would be necessary here. However, the objective is to allow the children to express themselves in constructive and creative ways].

Jimmy: I hate my mom. I cleaned up the basement and got nothing for it. Every time I clean the basement she always yells at me that it's not clean enough.

Darrell: My mom and dad are drunk again. They growled at me for no reason. I was just hanging round with my friends and I just missed one supper.

Sarah: I hate my mom. I cleaned up the whole house and never even got 25 cents. If she doesn't give me 25 bucks, I'm gonna mess up the whole house, even the basement. I'm gonna mess up her bedroom and I'm gonna sleep in her bed.

Jimmy: Are you kidding? She'll kill you.

Sarah: I'll run away. She can't kill me.

Jessie: My mom said, "Turn the bathroom light off."

[Any of the comments by the kids could have, and in hindsight should have, been explored in more depth. However, inexperience kept the focus on the unfolding story and limited the other kids to brief moments of creative expression].

Mother: *(To father)* How much did it cost to sharpen those skates?

Father: *(over the paper)* Uh ... about $10.15.

Mother: Can I have the change back?

Father: I'll give it to you tomorrow.

Mother: Make sure you bring it back.

Narrator: The children wake up and are late for school. There is lots of confusion and hurrying as people look for articles of clothing and other things.

Mother: *(to father)* Where's my money. Can I have it back now? I need it for gas to get to work.

Father: I uh ... I drank it up yesterday.

Narrator: She thinks it's a joke but ... .

Mother: Come on, don't joke. Just give me back the money.

Father: I told you I drank it up yesterday.

Mother: Damm you, I'm tired of you drinking up our money when I'm trying so hard to bring this family together. Well, I don't want you here by the time I come back.

Narrator: The dad feels sad and so do the children. Smiley (April) feels that it is all her fault, so she got $10.00 from her babysitting money.

Smiley: *(to her father)* Here dad, you need this more than I do.

Narrator: What would you do if you had been one of the kids when this happened?

The group discussed the problem with April and offered her their support and understanding. Through the dramatization of this event in her life, April was able to objectify the problem she was facing. The process was a cathartic release and provided April with the group's support when it was most needed, all of which made her better able to manage a very difficult situation.

Children do not often express stories such as April's as directly as April did. When they do it may be in the form of a brief reference in the midst of a drama exercise. These critical moments can be fleeting. It is then the responsibility of a popular theatre facilitator to identify and acknowledge the child's expression of the critical moment and to create the opportunity and the environment for the child to continue its expression. At this point the tension between intervention and facilitation rears its head. It is, in a popular theatre program, of critical importance that the facilitator does not manipulate or edit the child's story in any way other that to facilitate its dramatic exploration.

For example, in one program a group member was creating a scene which illustrated an important event from her life. At a critical point in the scene the facilitator stepped in, demonstrated a change in the action, and then said "This will make it stronger." The facilitator's suggestion was in fact changing the story, thereby negating the value of the child's experience. Further interventions of that sort would have neutralized the child's exploration by not allowing her to share her experiences, implying that her experience was not quite good enough and damaging the integrity of the work.

While it is true that without the facilitator's presence the story would not have been explored in the same way, the facilitator is responsible for creating the conditions that make the exploration possible. The facilitation, though, must be done with understanding and with sensitivity. The facilitator is responsible for posing questions that draw out the details of the story and lead to the exploration of alternative possibilities. Changing the story for theatrical effect negates the process. In another inner city children's program, the following events took place.

Brian's Story

At the McCauley Boys' and Girls' Club a few years later in the midst of a story telling exercise, 10-year-old Brian related the following. Brian said,

> The other day, on my way home, this van, it followed me from school. It stayed behind me everywhere I went. It followed me here to the Club and when I went inside it kept going. (personal communication 1991)

When Brian began to relate his story, the facilitator ignored her daily plan and allowed the story to emerge. She was able to dramatize the story and explore it in more depth. The facilitator posed questions such as "What choices did Brian have? Have you ever seen the van before? What colour was it?" Have you ever seen the driver before? Can you remember the licence number? Did you let anyone at the Boys'and Girls' Club know about the van? Should you? What should Brian or any of us do the next time." Questions such as these were discussed following the dramatization of Brian's story. With Brian's story the facilitator was able to draw questions and responses from the group while maintaining the positive nature of the discussion.

With young children, references to stories such as April's or Brian's can be brief and come when one least expects them. If the facilitator is not vigilant, not prepared to let go of the plan at any time, then valuable opportunities will be lost. It is in stories such as April's and Brian's that the value of popular theatre lies. Most popular theatre projects focus on adults and rarely deal with children. In programs with children, the facilitator must be experienced, sensitive, and vigilant. If not, opportunities will be missed and the depth of the work will suffer. In a program at Alex Taylor school the next year, the facilitator was not as vigilant or as aware of the realities that inner city children face on a daily basis.

Tim's Story

In another story telling exercise, 9-year-old Tim mentioned that his brother and sister used cocaine all the time. The facilitator, rather than grasping the moment and exploring the story through drama, chose to tell Tim and the other group members that using cocaine was bad and then continued with the daily plan (Alex Taylor School, Feb.11, 1992).

The facilitator was right. Using cocaine is bad; however, Tim's story needed a more creative response. What good did it serve telling Tim that his family did bad things? It is unlikely that the facilitator's response helped. In fact, it quite likely made Tim's problem worse. It is also reasonable to assume that some of the other children in the group had family members who were addicted to cocaine. The facilitator's response cast a shadow on their families as well. This sort of moralizing is not helpful and speaks to a weakness in the facilitator's understanding of the community in which she was working.

Tim's story should have been explored--with Tim's permission and with sensitivity-- using drama. Scenes could have been developed that explored the addictive nature of cocaine or how easy it is to become addicted to drugs. Drama could have been used to help Tim gain an understanding of the situation that he had to live with. He could have learned coping strategies rather than learning that his family did bad things. It is important for popular theatre workers and facilitators in children's programs to have an understanding of the day-to-day realities of the community that they are working in and above all not to pass judgement on the stories they hear.

My reflections on the facilitator's role and the process of intervention began to concern me early in the project's development. The very fact that a facilitator is present in a group represents a degree of intervention. The critical point though is that the intervention must be facilitative rather than directive. The facilitator is responsible for the creation of an environment that is safe, secure, facilitative, and supportive. The group is responsible for the reality that they choose to explore and analyze, the degree of analysis they choose to engage in, and the alternative responses they choose to make.

Children's Programs

Inner City Drama groups depend on the skills, experiences, sensitivity, and attitudes of the facilitator. It has always been quite difficult to find facilitators with the skills, experience, and attitudes that are appropriate for Inner City programs. Inner City has made efforts to address this problem in the following ways:

1. contracting experienced popular theatre workers
2. contracting drama majors and soliciting volunteers from the Faculty of Education and the Department of Drama
3. holding regular workshops to provide training and ongoing support for volunteers and facilitators
4. training interested young people from Inner City's performing group to work in programs with younger children as junior facilitators.

There have been clear benefits from all of these approaches. I have been privileged to learn valuable skills from experienced popular theatre workers. University students have brought a fresh, enthusiastic approach to Inner City programs. University students have also gained insights into the reality that young people from the inner city must face on a daily basis. These insights, I hope, have positively influenced their view of inner city youth; and as a result, the lives of their students.

Of these strategies, the fourth has proven the most successful. Training young people from Inner City's performing group as junior facilitators provides benefits to both the group members and the youth being trained. The group members see the junior facilitators as role models. The junior facilitators develop skills that can influence many areas of their lives. They in fact become community workers in partnership with children and youth from their own community. For the first few years of Inner City's community workers in partnership with children and youth from their own community. For the first few years of Inner City's operation contracting experienced theatre workers was how Inner City began its programming. Many theatre workers are not interested in working with inner city children. Contracting drama majors proved to be an important strategy. It is a strategy that is not, however, without its problems. Drama majors are not often familiar with the inner city environment and the pressures it places on many young children. Drama majors want to teach drama. While teaching drama is important it is not the focus of Inner City programming.

The focus of Inner City programming is to use drama to build self-confidence, enhance self-esteem, allow for creative expression, and explore personal and social issues. In the first few years of Inner City's programming, I did not fully understand this in great depth myself. I was somewhat naive and given to the over-simplification of complex social issues. Many inner city youth lack self-confidence, and are often inarticulate and unable to express themselves in healthy ways. Instead of healthy expression, many youth build protective shells around themselves. They have learned that to be open and vulnerable is dangerous. Withdrawing into a protective shell, a shell that gets thicker with age, is a street survival skill but it prevents healthy development The use of drama, I thought, could solve these problems. The youth could gain a measure of self-confidence and learn healthy and constructive ways of expressing themselves. Armed with these new abilities, I reasoned, the youth from Inner City drama programs would be better equipped to face and overcome the challenges of their environment. The preventative nature of Inner City drama programs, I thought, would crack the protective shell that many inner city children had begun to build. This, in turn, would allow for creative expression and encourage healthy behaviours. This reasoning, while difficult to measure in a quantitative way, was underscored by evaluative comments from Jim Taylor, the Executive Director of the Boys' and Girls' Club. He wrote,

> The Inner City Drama Program has had a significant impact on the

young people's ability to talk about some of these problems ...problems they have on the streets and in their homes (Letter of support, Aug.26, 1988). Stories such as April's, Tim's, and 9-year-old Hershal's further underscored this point.

Hershal Participates

Hershal came to the Alex Taylor program but did not speak. In fact Hershal was too withdrawn and shy to do anything except stay as close to the wall as he could. Half way through the program, after receiving much individual attention from Inner City volunteers, Hershal began to participate. By the end of the year's program he was taking part in elementary scene work (program notes, April 4, 1991).

In the next year's funding application, I cited Hershal's story as an example of the progress we were making. For Hershal, I wrote, this was a major breakthrough. It was proof positive of the preventative nature of Inner City programming. Hershal was coming out of his shell. He began to trust in the group. He began to participate in the program, develop the beginnings of self-confidence, and was able to reach out to others. This was prevention, I thought, and Inner City programs worked. The programs introduced inner city children to creative and constructive methods of expression. The children gained confidence and were able to work cooperatively with others. They created an environment that allowed children to feel safe expressing themselves, not for every child in the program but certainly for enough children to make the programs worthwhile.

Inner City Drama gained credibility in the inner city community and in the funding circles as a youth service agency that offered inner city children a preventative social service. For example, the City Of Edmonton provided funding for the first program which was evaluated by Celine-Lise George, Performing Arts Advisor for the City. George made the following observations:

At my spring visit, after not seeing the children for two months I was

> shocked at the improvement of their social and communication skills and at their increased confidence in themselves. I was also quite impressed with their commitment to the program which has also shown a high rate of attendance (personal communication, 1987).

This recognition of the value of the program from George and the City of Edmonton came with a promise of more funding for the next year.

As well as the recognition from George, it seemed as though other members of the greater community recognized the value of using drama to work with inner city children.

In the spring of that year (with George's letter of support as a reference), I applied to the Senate of the University of Alberta who, through the Senate's Emil Skarin Fund, provided financial support for the children's programs in 1987 and again in 1995.

At this point, my theoretical understanding of the environment that I was working in was based on the assumption that the contradictions and inequality I had experienced and was observing did not provide equal opportunity or a fair chance for all. My earlier introduction to theories of social reproduction which implicate schools in the generational reproduction of social class and cite the correspondence between schooling, social class, family background, and social inequalities as the route whereby children of parents with low socioeconomic standing correspondingly acquire low socioeconomic standing themselves reinforced my assumptions (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Mc Laren, 1989) . However, I was not at this time working from a theoretical base that connected the concept of structural violence to youth in the inner city. I related my own experiences growing up in the relative poverty of an inner city environment to those of the youth I was working with. I was convinced that creative expression, self-confidence, and education would counter the deterministic nature of correspondence and reproduction and lead to social and educational development, thereby providing an avenue of mobility for many children. Although it was obvious that the children were benefiting from the program, I had not reflected in enough depth on the generational, environmental, and cultural nature of the issues they were facing.

Summary

After 10 years of using drama to work with inner city youth, I am convinced of its value in programs for younger children. The stories and anecdotes provide more obvious evidence of that value; however, incidents that obvious are infrequent. Creating a drama group out of energetic 6-12 year old children is not done smoothly, particularly if self-discipline rather than imposed discipline is the goal. If the discipline is imposed with a heavy hand, then the child's sense of freedom and creativity is compromised. Granted, young children do not begin to exercise self-discipline without the guiding hand of a creative and patient facilitator--but it does happen. When it does, then the group becomes a unit and substantial dramatic exploration of personal and social issues, often through the lens of popular culture, can take place. However, despite these important incidents of social analysis, the day-to-day program activities and exercises are the foundation of the programming. The circle encourages cooperation, builds trust, and the realization that each person, regardless of size, has the power to influence the drama. The drama exercises focus on creating a cooperative group that is able to trust one another, has the self-confidence to speak, and is willing to risk being vulnerable. These qualities are opposed to the lack of trust and unwillingness to cooperate or take risks, which is what one commonly finds among inner city children and youth.

These positive qualities spill over into other areas of their lives. Again, the impact of this work is difficult to quantify. But it does have an impact. When one is encouraged to take risks and break free from the false sense of security that comes from closing oneself off, then growth is possible. If, for example, a child experiences encouragement and success in the drama program, then the self-confidence which grows out of that experience can be applied to academic studies. More than likely the child will have more confidence in school work, in responding to questions in class, and in attempting the unfamiliar. It is in taking risks such as these that personal and academic growth take place.

For example, it is widely recognized that poor children commonly do less well academically than those from a middle or upper class background (Curtis,et al., 1992; McLaren,1989). One might well ask: How can a program, regardless of the quality, that meets once a week for an hour or two have an influence on the desperation and generational problems that one finds in the inner city environment? Academic success and personal growth are difficult to realize if one feels the need to close oneself off from potentially harmful outside influences. While this survival strategy may be necessary in some areas of one's life, it is harmful in others. The children's drama programs, if they do nothing else, provide an outlet for creative expression and evidence of the joy that one finds in relating to others.

The programs also provide children with positive role models where there may be few. These subtle influences can and do impact lives. After a few years of struggling with these questions and learning more about the power of drama and theatre, I had gained enough confidence in myself to begin working as a facilitator in programs with older youth. I knew that the issues which began to surface in the children's programs such as lack of confidence, low self-esteem, difficulties at home, and problems coping with the immediate environment affected many older youth as well.

CHAPTER V

BUILDING PEACEFUL RELATIONSHIPS: TRUST, RESPECT, AND DEFINING THE ISSUES

Introduction

In 1988 I began to work as a facilitator in Inner City Drama programs with teenagers, youth who are often referred to as street kids, street involved, or youth at risk. When discussing these youth, I will refer to them as young people or inner city youth. The previous terms imply that the youth have problems that need to be dealt with rather than potential waiting to be realized. This chapter is concerned with the period 1988-1989 when I first began to work with teenagers and older youth. It focuses on the problems I encountered and the responses I chose. This is also the period in which I discovered popular theatre. The theme of popular theatre, to give voice to the voiceless and to facilitate the empowerment of subordinate groups, became important to the development of Inner City Drama. In these programs I usually worked with a partner, hence the use of we throughout the narrative. During this period and later I have had the pleasure and benefit of working with cultural workers such as Lorna Thomas, Tony Hall, Phil Paul, Jane Heather, Jan Selman and, for several years, Alexina Dalgetty. They have all--at different times in the project's development--acted as resource persons when the need arose, as it often did during these years.

The Programs

In the 1988-1989 program years, one inner city community agency and one school agreed to host Inner City Drama programs for teenagers. These programs were supported financially by the Nechi Institute, a drug and alcohol education center with a focus on native people and by the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC). The community-based program, for the first year, was held in a space provided by an inner city agency with a youth drop-in. This group was made up of mostly native youth and eventually grew into the Downtown Performance Group. Both AADAC and Nechi counsellors and community education consultants saw the potential for using drama to deal with issues that can lead to substance abuse. Nechi's support was important in establishing the group but was not intended to continue past the first year. AADAC supported Inner City programs for three years.

For AADAC, the young people in the program represented a population that they had difficulty reaching. The traditional lecture presentations, videos, or workshops by substance abuse experts did not impact the youth in a significant way. The youth had their own experiences with addiction and substance abuse, experiences that were not acknowledged in most substance abuse presentations. Pamphlets and brochures detailing the damage that can be caused by substance abuse were not often read or taken seriously by inner city youth. Their substance abuse was most often a symptom of more fundamental problems such as the need to escape grinding poverty, unhealthy or abusive home situations, and a profound lack of hope. The ability of popular theatre to shine light in the dark corners and engage youth in a process of self-analysis was not only recognized by AADAC representatives but by other youth workers who witnessed the process in action. For example Jackie Fiala, Native Programs Coordinator at the Edmonton Young Offenders Centre, had this to say,

> Through the use of drama ICDA is able to reach inner city youth where traditional methods fail The programs create a sense of cooperation and peer support that encourages the youth to explore alternatives to destructive habits and experience healthy modes of behaviour and expression. This process enhances self-esteem and encourages the youth to take responsibility for their actions (personal communication, 1990).

For the youth, substance abuse and crime were repeatedly identified as problems and topics for dramatic exploration. The school-based program was held at the Eastside Junior High School. The Eastside area is located in the northeast end of Edmonton's inner city and, like most inner city areas, is characterized by poverty and plagued with problems of substance abuse and other related criminal activities.

Adding More Depth

The more I learned about popular theatre the more value I saw in its philosophy and methodology. The facilitator in a popular theatre program, in my interpretation, should not direct the project but use drama exercises and games to create an environment where the group members are comfortable and confident enough to choose a direction for theatrical exploration.

In the fall of 1988, hoping to learn more, I registered in Drama 359, a popular theatre course taught by Tony Hall, a skilled and experienced popular theatre worker. Tony introduced me to popular theatre and to theatre worker Phil Paul. I was, after interrupting his honeymoon, able to convince Phil to become a co-facilitator with me in the first program for teenagers. Much of what we were doing in Inner City drama programs was similar in theory and practice to what some popular theatre workers were doing in Canada and in other parts of the world. Like other popular theatre projects, community members were directly involved in acting out issues which were important to themselves and their community (CTR, 1988; Epskamp, 1989; Kidd & Rashid, 1984; Selman, 1987).

The Circle

In most groups, however, some are more willing to let their voices be heard than others. In such circumstances it is the facilitator's responsibility to ensure that all group members have the opportunity to speak. Some youth will not articulate their issues in the circle but will speak through drama. Melissa's story comes immediately to mind. She was shy to the point of rarely speaking, yet when Melissa took part in a drama exercise that involved using group members' bodies to create a sculpture representing a critical moment in her life, Melissa's voice was heard loud and clear. Later in this chapter, I will explore in more detail what Melissa expressed through drama that she was not able to vocalize in the circle.

In the circle, the absence of a visible hierarchy where someone is obviously in control and in charge is necessary if the work is to have integrity and reflect the concerns of the program participants and not the agenda of the facilitator/researcher. The young people are used to being told what to do. In Inner City drama programs I wanted the youth to provide the content for the theatrical exploration and to have the power to exercise choice over the content of each session. If the objective of the program was to use drama as a tool to create a safe environment where the youth could feel comfortable expressing themselves then, I reasoned, it would be important for them to have as much input into the nature and direction of the program as possible. This principle is an important theoretical component of the philosophy that underlies Inner City programming and, as I was soon to discover, the practice of popular theatre. The theory did, however, resist practical application. The youth expected, and in fact wanted, to be told what to do. As the youth began to assume control of the circles, disagreements developed. When conflicts develop it is the facilitator's responsibility to help find a constructive resolution to the problem. Sometimes a few well-chosen and timely words will do the trick. For example, "It seems as though there are some choices to make. These are the three choices that I see." The next step is to discuss the possible consequences of each choice. Bearing in mind that conflicts among this group are usually settled in a violent manner, it is to their credit that this process usually does the trick.

However, getting to the stage where young people, accustomed to taking orders from authority figures such as teachers, social workers, police, and other adults, begin to give direction to their own programs and direct their own development is at best a difficult journey. The directions for this journey were not to be found in any of the literature I had come across. There were, however, important signposts among the recorded experiences of other theatre workers. Ruth Smillie and Kelly Murphy's work with native youth in Saskatoon's Cultural Survival School, which was documented in the book *Story Circles* (1986), provided an early resource and allowed me to adapt some of their exercises to our particular context. The circle was also a ritual in the Cultural Survival School project.

The importance of the circle cannot be overstated. Opening and closing circles became a ritual in all programs. In the circle we shared ownership and responsibility for the programs with the young people in the groups. This sharing, as I have previously stated, met with initial resistance from the youth. They wanted us to tell them what to do, to take control. If we did, however, the freedom and creativity that is necessary for the dramatic exploration of personal and social issues would be stunted. The program might then reflect the agenda of the facilitator rather than the needs of the participants. The content of a popular theatre program is set by the group and must come from the group, not the facilitator. This initial resistance led to a period of what I call "creative chaos." The period of creative chaos can be difficult to wait out. The impulse to take control can dominate one's thinking. But to give in to the impulse would be a mistake. In the early part of a program there is often a lack of trust, respect, and cooperation among group members and facilitators. If the program survives this period and the phase of creative chaos is allowed to run its course the young people in the group realize that if anything substantial is going to take place then they must assume responsibility for their actions and choose to exercise self-discipline. This process is not always completed with 100 per cent success. The degree of success, however, usually determines the depth and integrity of dramatic exploration that takes place in the program. If there is not a climate of trust and respect among the group members and facilitators, then there will be a reluctance to reveal personal stories and experiences.

Trust, Respect, Cooperation, And Non-violence

The values of trust, respect, and non-violence are central in Inner City programs. These values are introduced through drama exercises and by example, for the circle is often the place where experiences are shared and stories begin. In the circle, if a climate of respect is established through the drama and popular theatre exercises, glimpses of each other's humanity are revealed. For example, in the opening circle the facilitator should always show genuine concern for absent group members and enquire as to their whereabouts. Respect should always be shown to all members by all members. Individuals should not be criticized for their views. Views can, however, be discussed. Then, storytelling exercises can begin to replace the chaos that dominated early sessions. When facilitating these storytelling exercises, as part of the group, I share personal stories when my turn comes. By opening myself up to the group, my humanity is revealed, and I am seen more as a group member than an outside agent. I take extra care though that my story does not become part of an extended exploration or analysis. To date there has never been a desire expressed to explore one of my stories.

There are guidelines set by the group that are intended to govern the sharing of stories in the circle and in at other times. For example when someone is sharing a personal story, other group members must be respectfully silent. All decisions are made in the circle and based on consensus. What is revealed in the circle stays in the circle. This principle can cause a potential conflict. Facilitators, when working in a school or community agency, have a legal obligation to notify the host agency when youth in the program disclose incidents such as sexual or physical abuse. In a later chapter I will discuss this conflict in more depth. At this point, however, it is important to continue discussing the program as it developed. The above principles underlie the nature of the circle as used in the Inner City Drama programs. The sharing of stories and the recognizing of birthdays are important social equalizers. Drama exercises that build trust, self-confidence, and allow for enjoyment and laughter lay the ground work for a strong circle.

My objective during this period was not to use drama to dig into the young people's personal lives but to create a positive atmosphere for the youth in the group. I noted it this way in my journal.

> I think my objective for these programs (1 day a week) is to create a positive atmosphere for the kids in the group.
> If something happens beyond that e.g. choice and voice, great and I will be prepared to work with it but for 1 hr a week a positive atmosphere is OK (Nov. 12, 1988).

Once a climate of trust and respect was established, group members began to share personal stories. To introduce the idea of sharing and the safety of the circle, group members were asked in the circle at the close of one session to bring a personal item that held some importance for them to the circle the next week. When group members brought their personal items to the circle, each in turn explained what the item was and why it was important to them. This practice was popular and became part of many early sessions. When the youth and facilitators revealed their personal joys to each other, false fronts were dropped and common humanity was revealed. The practice was an important group builder; it helped create a climate of trust and respect among group members and paved the way for more in-depth work. Although we soon began to deal with issues such as rape, prostitution, and other forms of abuse, group sessions were marked by laughter and high energy.

In many popular theatre programs, and in many different contexts, clarifying oppression is seen as a way to transcend the limitations of a hostile environment (Boal, 1985; Epskamp, 1987; Kidd & Rashid, 1984; Lambert, 1982). However, given the age of the participants (13-19) and the problems they were dealing with (poverty, addiction, homelessness, sexual abuse, substance abuse, physcial abuse, and the lack of a formal education), our objective was to create a safe place where we could begin to work cooperatively with each other. This process included the introduction of non-violent conflict resolution and a sense of trust and respect among the group. These values run contrary to the value system that most of the youth lived by.

Contrary to the objective of some other popular theatre and popular education projects, we chose not to use theatre to expose the oppression in the young people's lives. To do that I reasoned, as my understanding of the popular theatre process deepened, would damage their ability to cope with their environment. The youth were psychologically and physically bleeding, wounded by the conditions of their lives. We chose to first do our best to stop the bleeding and to use drama to build strength and expose contradictions. Once the youth began to develop the beginnings of mutual support and the feeling of being in this together, we began to explore issues of substance in which contradictions between the way they lived and the way they wanted to live were exposed and responses discussed. The discussion grew to include not only group members but audiences as well. As the youth gained strength, issues of oppression and their causes found their way into some of our work. This is a long-term project and not merely a series of popular theatre workshops. Susan's story, which begins in this chapter, is exemplary of the long-term nature of the process we were engaged in. To provide tools for the youth and to help create the conditions in which the youth might understand and overcome the limitations of their environment was part of my objective. As a result, some of the youth began to feel that they had control over the content and direction of the program and increasingly, of their lives. In the weekly meetings, individual group members began to function as a group. They began to trust, respect, and care for each other. In the drama games and exercises group members opened themselves up; their humanity was exposed. Individuals were beginning to see each other as part of the group and as people with feelings, not some other that one needs to be wary of and compete with. Once this process begins, substantial progress can be made.

The Downtown Group

During the first year, the Downtown Street group meetings were held once a week in an inner city agency that offered social services for adults and youth. The agency is located in the heart of Edmonton's inner city. The group was composed of eight First Nation and Metis youth between the ages of 13 and 17. For the first year Jackie Fiala, a Metis woman and one of the youth workers at the agency, took part in the weekly group meetings. Brenda Daley, a First Nation woman and counsellor with Nechi Institute, also took part in the occasional group meeting. This practice proved to be an important bridge in establishing communication between facilitators and group members and in an environment where the youth felt safe. To feel safe is to be in an environment where the concerns and dangers of life on the street are temporarily suspended. Creating this environment was the first challenge and depended on the power of drama games and popular theatre exercises. For example, when the foundations of the Downtown group were being built the need to provide an alternate value system to what one finds on the street became obvious. One of the first rules of the street is to not trust anyone. Lorne, one of the group members explained it this way,

> My dad always told me don't ever tell anyone your feelings
> because they'll just use it against you and they'll hurt you
> with it (personal communication, December 11, 1994).

In a later interview, Lorne said his mom's motto was "DTA:"

> I asked him, What's DTA?
> Lorne replied, Don't trust anyone
> (personal communication, December 22, 1995).

While this strategy protects one from the dangers of a hostile environment it harms development and is a recipe for later disasters when emotions, buried under alcohol and other drugs, eventually erupt in violent and destructive ways. Preventing this eruption and encouraging creative expression was one of the objectives of the program. An example of how we set out to meet that objective is clear in these early session plans.

1. Open circle
   (the ritual of the circle after some token resistance has remained constant for the last ten years)

2. Cross legged race
   -work in pairs with someone that you don't usually work with
   -one arm and one leg should be around your partner's arm and leg
   -move as one person
   -legs must move together

3. Artist and Clay (sculpting with the bodies of other group members)
   This is a particularly powerful exercise and must be used with sensitivity. Throughout this and other exercises I am careful to remind people to take care of their partner. This is important and is the beginning of trust and respect.

   Instructions
   This exercise must be done in silence and respectfully.
   Choose a partner (someone you don't usually work with)
   One partner (A) becomes the artist and the other (B) the clay

   When sculpting, A remains motionless and B, moving the clay gently and paying careful attention to details such as facial expressions and body posture, creates a sculpture that is important to themselves. It is the group members choice whether or not to explain the sculpture

   When the sculptures are complete, each artist stands back and

> examines her/his creation, then walks around the room and looks at the other sculptures.
>
> The next step is to bring the sculptures together to create a group sculpture. Give the sculpture a title
>
> The next step is to switch roles so that B becomes the artist and A the clay. Everyone gets a chance

The plan was to take this process further; however, the session was interrupted when Susan, one of the group members who was not taking part in the session that evening finally arrived. What took place after Susan arrived was completely unexpected. Susan's story unfolded in this way:

SUSAN SLASHED

One night about three quarters of the way through the program year Susan did not show up for the drama meeting. This was unusual. Susan was always present and enthusiastic. Near the end of the session she came into the meeting and took part in the circle. During the course of events, Susan casually exposed her bare arm. The arm was covered in blood. Susan had slashed her arm. (Slashing is usually more of a cry for help than a suicide attempt). When group members asked Susan about her arm, she ran away. She did, however, return to the group the next week. (program notes: March 29, 1989).

After Susan ran away and we tried unsuccessfully to contact her, the balance of the session was cancelled. Before going home we discussed the incident with group members. Most were concerned and sympathetic. Slashing is much too common an occurance in the environment in which we work. It is a cry for help but it is also an act of desperation.

The next week we continued the session which had begun the previous week. We did, however, lead up to the statues with a new introductory process that was intended to build group cohesiveness which we thought was particularly necessary considering the events of the week before. Floyd Favel, a native playwright, and Brenda Daley, who was at that time a counsellor from Nechi/Poundmaker Institute, were on hand for this session. Jackie Faiala, educational consultant for the host agency, worked within the group and I facilitated the session. I was the only non-Native in the group. The presence of Floyd, Brenda, and Jackie, to me, gave a stamp of approval to my role in the drama group. I am not sure how important it was for the group. The session proceeded in this way.

Open Circle

> Introductions and greetings
> Before the session, Susan asked that the previous week's incident not become a topic of discussion

Draw you in your world

> Distribute coloured markers and roll out newsprint.
> Each person was asked to draw a picture that introduced her/himself to the rest of the group. The drawing must show "you in your world." It should show what is important to you, your favourite thing, and one thing that you would like to change.
> After everyone has completed their drawings one by one the group members, guests, and facilitator explain the drawings
> While drawings are being explained, everyone must be respectfully silent.

This was an important exercise, as group members began to reveal themselves to one another and other group members began to respect their revelations.

Warm Up

> For this session we played upstage/downstage. The facilitator shouts out stage directions and the players try to follow. Each time a person makes a mistake, she/he sits down. The last one standing wins.

Soon after this, "hug tag" became our standard. Hug tag requires that one person be it and try to tag another player. The only way to be safe is to hug another player or group of players. This became an important game for the Downtown Group. Most did not liked to be touched or hugged, but after the barriers were let down group hugs became an important part of our sessions. The hugs often became circle hugs where each person gives and receives a hug.

Slow Motion Race

This exercise was familiar to the group and always filled with laughter

Trust Games

Wind in the Willows

-The group stands together shoulder-to-shoulder in a small tight circle
-One person volunteers to be first to stand in the middle of the circle
-The person in the centre closes her/his eyes and falls trusting that the group will catch them and pass them around the circle. This game is done in silence except for the wind sound that the group makes while passing the person in the centre around the circle
-When the person is ready each person takes a turn in the centre .

This game sounds simple, but when it comes to putting your trust in a group of people that you don't know and as most of the group were not used to trusting anyone, it can be a significant experience.

Trust Circle

-The group stands together shoulder-to-shoulder in a small tight circle
-One person volunteers to be first to stand in the middle of the circle
-The person in the centre begins to slowly walk around the circle with her/his eyes closed
-The group's task is to look after the person in the centre. This is continuously reinforced by the facilitator who repeats throughout the exercise comments such as "Look after your partner. Take care of your partner." The group keeps the person within the circle by gently redirecting her/him each time she/he begins to stray out of the circle

Again, this exercise seems deceptively simple; but, as with many of the exercises, danger lurks under the simple exterior. If not facilitated safely, it could produce feelings other than the desired trust and group cohesiveness and place the participants and project in danger. In this project it was necessary for me, as facilitator, to trust the group and reveal myself when appropriate if I expected the youth to do the same.

Sculptures

-The artist and clay exercise is followed by this exercise
-Group members are instructed to think of a time that was particularly important to them. The incident could be happy or sad

> -Next, the facilitator asks for a volunteer to, using the group as clay, find the central image of the incident and create a sculpture that illustrates the image or critical moment.
> The resulting sculptures range from the light and humourous to disclosures that involve abuse and a range of other serious topics

For this meeting the sculptures were light and inconsequential. The session concluded with the usual closing circle (Program notes, April 5, 1989).

Thirteen-year-old Susan's tragedy provided concrete evidence that the drama group had, for some, become a safe place and had the potential to become a support network for its members. Although nothing was resolved in this situation, it was an important marker. The group rallied around Susan and became a more cohesive unit. Susan thought of the group meetings as a safe place and chose to come to the group when she needed support and went on to become involved with Inner City up until the present (1996). In an interview a few years later, Susan explained what the support had meant to her. She said, "I had tried destroying myself and people were there to help me along, to get to the healing path" (personal communication, December 2, 1994). This situation set a precedent that was to repeat itself over the years. The drama meetings became a safe place and the values of trust, respect, and cooperation had begun to replace the values of the street.

SITUATION CRITICAL

Once the group thought of the drama meetings as a safe place where they could feel comfortable with themselves and with each other, we began to tell personal stories that exposed our fears, our hurts, and our joys. Some of the stories were dramatized and discussed; other times there was no discussion, but choices were explored through scene work and students drew their own insights according to their personal life situation and their level of readiness. The sense of common humanity that this process brings to group members and facilitators alike is nothing short of astounding.

One particular exercise that enhances this process and should only be done when there is an element of trust and respect in the group is called *Medicine Bag*. Group members sit in a circle and the facilitator, having pre-selected and put in a bag everyday items such as a can of soup, an ash tray, a text book, pen, and other items, empties the bag in the middle of the circle. Each group member takes a few minutes to reflect on the items in the circle and then chooses one that reminds him or her of a story or incident that took place in her or his life life. Once the group members have all selected an item one person begins to tell their story to the group. While the story is being told, other group members are to remain silent and not comment on the story. The story telling makes its way around the circle and the facilitator acknowledges each story in turn. This exercise can be quite a powerful tool for building group cohesiveness, and a way for group members to realize that they are not alone, that other people have had similar experiences, and that perhaps being abused for example, was not their fault.

The feeling of love, of acknowledging our common humanity, overcomes ethnic and cultural barriers. It forges a bond among group members that cannot be described with words on a page. Among members of the Downtown group, this bond grew stronger over the years and was felt and seen as a good thing by new members.

The program year concluded with a final presentation of *Situation Critical*, which centered around the group's experience with the problem of shoplifting and the resulting encounters with the police. As Dale Stelter, who covered the presentation for the *Alberta Native News* wrote, the play was "based on actual events from the actors and actreses own lives" (Auguust, 1989, p. 43). *Situation Critical* was the first of our public performances. The content, while superficial in nature, was drawn from the group members' direct experience. Most of the youth had experienced shoplifting and the resulting encounters with the police. The act of preparing for a performance and then the experience of telling their story to an audience built self-confidence among the group and created a positive group dynamic that grew from this point on.

The Eastside Group

The 1988-1989 program year also marked the beginning of a program for teenagers at Eastside School. Twelve youth between the ages of 12 and 14 attended this program. This group was more ethnically diverse than the Downtown group. Approximately 30 per cent of the youth were of First Nation or Metis background, 20 per cent were from an East Indian background, and the remaining 50 per cent were mixed caucasian of various ethnic backgrounds. There did not appear to be ethnic divisions among the group. This group was established as an after-school program and met each Monday at the end of the school day. However, the period of "creative chaos" was longer with this group. When the youth came into the drama room at the end of the school day, they were literally bouncing off the walls. Introducing values of trust, respect, and cooperation was quite difficult with this group. The respect that the circle demands was not always present. Despite these difficulties, and I underscore the notion of difficulties, significant progress was made.

Dean Disclosed

In one of the Eastside Group's circles 14-year-old Dean spontaneously disclosed that he was contemplating suicide (Program notes, Nov. 21, 1988). This disclosure came as a shock to me. In establishing both the Downtown and Eastside programs, I had established connections with social workers and other referrals in case of such an emergency. I acknowledged Dean's disclosure and with his permission made the appropriate referrals. The fact that Dean felt safe enough to disclose his feelings told me that the program was working.

Rock Travelled Through Space

For Rock, another member of the Eastside group, the breakthrough came when the drama room became a space ship. In one exercise the drama room was transformed into a spacecraft. Each person entering the ship had to produce proper identification which was issued to all space travellers at the door. Upon receiving identification, group members and facilitators stayed in role. Rock, one of the group members, was overweight and the butt of many jokes. Rock always showed up for group meetings, shoulders hunched and hair covering his face. I could tell that Rock wanted to participate but he always held back--until the space journey, that is. Navigator Rock was manning his station when all of a sudden he announced loudly, "There's a planet out there." For Rock this was a major breakthrough (program notes, Dec. 5, 1988). He not only spoke out, he imagined that he saw a planet in the music room. After taking that initial risk, Rock expressed himself on a regular basis. While Rock's story is not an earth shattering social issue, for Rock it was momentous. For the group, the space exercise was a watershed. Although the exercise was more related to the methods of the drama in education movement--where the teacher works within the group and takes a leading role in the direction of the group's activities (Johnson & O'Neill, 1989)--than it was to popular theatre, it paved the way for more significant work to follow.

The Eastside group went on to explore social issues that impacted their lives. At the end of this first year, the group created a play out of the issues they explored. The play, *Moment of Decision*, was about peer pressure and the use of drugs. These issues were very much a part of the young people's lives and there proved to be real value in their discussion and dramatic exploration. The play was shown at a youth festival and at the school for the group's peers. Each performance was followed by a discussion period in which the issues raised in the play were discussed with the audience. The audience at the youth festival responded enthusiastically to the performance of *Moment of Decision*. Through the dynamics of the discussion period the group members gained confidence, realized that they had important things to say, and that people were willing to listen.

Reflection

In reflecting on the year, I was convinced of the program's value and enthusiastic about its potential for inner city youth. I began the year with much enthusiasm and completed it with more. I found facilitating both groups to be a creative and intellectual challenge on several levels. To recreate stories from people's personal experience demands respect and creativity from the facilitator. However, the creativity must not focus on editing for theatrical effect. The facilitator does not, I was convinced, have the right to select parts of the youths' experience--even if it is more theatrically interesting--and reject others. Such a process could be harmful. Intellectually, I was constantly on guard against passing judgement on the young people and the situations that they found themselves in. How, I thought, could I judge their actions when I had no idea what went on in their lives or what motivated the actions? I had no way of knowing if a group member's anger was a result of abuse, neglect, or lack of love at home or stemmed from problems at school. Many times I have felt that a group member was being disruptive and unreasonable only to discover later the desperation of the situation that they lived in.

Pedagogically, I found the process to reflect what I considered the essence of peace education. The drama programs were based on a philosophy of drawing out, on respecting the group member's knowledge base and building from there. The project was participatory, respectful, and pedagogically sound. As I began to learn about popular theatre I found enough similarities between popular theatre projects and Inner City Drama programs that I wanted to learn more. The youth in both the Downtown and Eastside groups were among Edmonton's urban poor, young voices that are rarely heard. The young people's voices were heard at public performances, which represented a public acknowledgement of the importance of the work we were doing and gave the youth confidence and encouragement to carry on. The core of our work though was in the process and not the performance. Both Susan's slashing and then coming to the group for support and Dean's suicide disclosure spoke volumes about the value and potential of using popular theatre in programs with inner city youth. There was, however, a difference in the way that the circle was used in each group.

In the Downtown Group, the circle was treated with respect most of the time. In the Eastside Group, respect for the circle was not always present. Susan's cry for help was heard by the all the group members and became a group concern. Dean's cry for help, on the other hand, was heard only by the group facilitator and never became a point for the group to rally around. The Eastside Group met in the school, after school, and seemed to carry the ethos of the school with them. They resisted taking responsibility for their actions and did not become as familiar with the concept of self-discipline as one would have wished. The Downtown Group, on the other hand, met in the evenings and was not associated with a school. The Downtown Group began to take responsibility for their actions and began the process of developing self-discipline.

Both groups used theatre to explore their reality. The sharing of hopes, joys, and fears that took place in the Downtown Group's circles did not have the same depth or sincerity in the Eastside Group's circles. This difference between the two groups is critical in the nature of their future development. In that first year, however, both groups had taken the Inner City process past issues of self-confidence and creative expression and begun to use theatre to analyze and come to terms with their social reality.

Trust, Respect, and Defining the Issues

In the fall of 1989 I studied with Jan Selman, one of Canada's more knowledgeable and experienced popular theatre workers. Jan made herself available to me as an advisor for that year and for several years to come. That fall Inner City programs resumed in all four locations. Financial assistance for this third year was provided by the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC). It had become a principel of Inner City Drama's philosophy to, whenever possible, offer programs in the same locations year after year. In this way the programs had the continuity that I felt was necessary if the work was to have integrity. The issues that had begun to emerge in the programs, such as substance abuse, crime, violence, and suicide, required a long-term commitment.

In this section I will continue to follow the popular theatre process as it developed in both the Downtown and Eastside groups. In the previous year both groups created a play out of the social issues they explored. However, the work of the Downtown Group was to reach a depth that proved out of reach for the Eastside group. In this section I will consider some of the reasons why this situation may have occurred.

The Eastside Group

The program year at Eastside School began with the core group established the year before and with a few new members. The core group of 7 youth between 13 and 15 years old had one performance under their belt and looked forward to more. They began the year creating scenes with eventual performance in mind. The scenes were based on their daily lives and dealt with issues of their immediate environments. The circles were respected to a point but the group was difficult to work with. This problem often places the facilitator in a difficult position. Often the youth who are most difficult need the program most. On the other hand, the actions of one or a few youth can prove damaging to the overall program. This line is always difficult to walk. It seemed that whenever I found myself thinking that a particular group member was causing too much trouble I would, in a one-to-one conversation or in the sharing of stories in the group, learn details from her or his life. These details most often included abuse and neglect of some kind and I was very quickly reminded of the need to be humble and not judgmental.

That's Blackmail

The year was difficult, but we managed to "walk the line." *That's Blackmail* was created out a composite of individual scenes about youth crime and drug abuse. The scenes focused on drug abuse, shoplifting, and car theft. In the scenes, stolen items were sold and the money was used to buy drugs. In the play three boys catch some girls from their school in the act of stealing jewellery from a department store. Later, the boys confronted them with what they had seen.and laid the foundation for the blackmail. The girls had to steal from the store again, only this time give the spoils to the boys. The boys in turn would sell the goods and buy drugs with the profit. All were to meet at a party the next night. The scheme came apart at the party. Store security caught the girls and the police were called. The girls talked and the party was raided. As the play ended, the blackmailers were arrested for the possession of drugs. *That's Blackmail* was performed as part of a youth festival at the Chinook Theatre (1990). The play was followed by a discussion between the young performers and the audience about youth crime, peer pressure, and substance abuse. To the best of my knowledge, most of the youth were not directly involved in the issues of the play to the extent that they were illustrated. Many had experimented or were on the verge of experimenting with marijuana and other drugs. Shoplifting was familiar to some, car theft to others, and almost everyone had been at a party where marijuana was used. None of the group, however, had attempted to blackmail their peers.

The performance was like the tip of an iceberg with 6 months of process beneath it. Throughout the 6 months, group members began to share personal stories and to question aspects of their social reality. The analysis of this reality, however, was limited to scratching the surface. *That's Blackmail* was fiction built on a kernel of truth. It was a playful extension of their reality rather than a direct exploration of it. This way of using drama to explore their reality was characteristic of the Eastside

Group. For example, in a brainstorming session with the group, the following topics were suggested for exploration:

Having aids (sic) and going to a public school
Death
Detentions (school)
Elvis Presley
Loneliness
Relationships
Peer presure (sex and drugs)
A hockey game
A rock concert
Being Famous
Bullies in school
Homework

(Program notes Jan. 16, 1989)

Exploration of these issues many times seemed to approach the level of in-depth analysis that was beginning to take place in the Downtown meetings but faltered on the edge of adolescent frivolity. When the group performed for their peers, the issues of the play--drugs, crime, peer pressure, and the questions that they raised--were taken seriously by both audience and actors but again never reached the depth of analysis that was beginning to take place with the Downtown Group. The exaggerated version of reality presented by the Eastside Group was, in my interpretation, a difficult problem. The group was not using the exaggerated style as a way of coming to terms with difficult personal and social issues. In many situations what they were presenting was a view of reality that saw drug use and petty crime as actions and behaviours that they should imitate.

The Downtown Group, on the other hand, at times presented an exaggerated version of their reality as a theatrical device intended to add a touch of humour to difficult personal and social issues. The humour and exaggerations made it easier for the group to present difficult issues. The stylistic choices were, as always, group choices that increased in sophistication and complexity as the project progressed.

The Downtown Group

In the meetings with theDowntown Group and in their plays, the group dealt directly with issues from their experience. In the group meetings the circle was respected and a tone of mutual respect and support was established among group members. In the 1989-1990 program year, the Downtown Group members were between 13 and 16 years of age and composed of between 80 and 100 per cent aboriginal youth. There were many times when mine was the only white face in the group. Over the years membership fluctuated but the group remained largely aboriginal.

When the next program year began there were some changes in the group. However, enough of the group members returned that we were able to begin the year with a core group from the year previous. Before we could begin to deal with substantial issues in our group meetings, given the changes in participants, some group building was necessary. This was accomplished by using drama exercises that promoted trust and cooperation. Once a climate of trust and respect was established, the young people felt more comfortable taking risks, sharing personal stories, and discussing responses to dilemmas they were facing or had faced in the past. At this point it is important to note that, for the most part, members of this group did not know each other before coming together in the drama meetings. There were a few exceptions--some had seen each other on the street but were not friends.

This group met in the evenings from 7-9 p.m. I picked group members up at her or his home for drama meetings and drove them home again after. When someone was not at home I went looking for her or him with the rest of the group. We searched the arcades, the park, the streets or other places that the youth frequented. When we found the missing member we (myself and other group members) convinced them to come to the drama meeting. This gathering ritual was necessary for most of that year but did not last. I always picked people up at their homes and after a while it was no longer necessary to comb the streets looking for missing group members. They were ready and waiting to come to drama. When I reflect on this ritual, I realize its importance in the Downtown Group's development. It introduced me to the young people's world. I was able to learn more about where and how they spent their time. I came to know characters from the neighbourhood and could laugh at inside jokes. The result was that I had spent time in some homes and entered the corridors of their world. Now, I might add that this was no walk in the park. The streets and arcades that we are talking about are frequented by small time drug dealers, petty criminals, prostitutes, and other people who learn to live by their wits. The youth receive their introduction to this world early. In many cases their homes are anything but havens from this world. They are often part of it. Picking young people up while parents or care givers were drunk was not an unusual event. Interrupting arguments and finding young people too upset to come to drama became part of the routine. One incident from this period sticks in my mind as being not quite routine. As I was doing my rounds picking people up for drama, I knocked on the front door of a Downtown Group member's home. The door opened quickly and before I knew it, I had a 6" blade against my chest. I later realized that I had knocked too loudly and authoritatively, frightening Jim's step-father. Luckily incidents like that did not happen too often. Throughout this period I was looked on by the group as part of the community rather than as an outsider coming in to do drama. This broke down barriers that may have stood in the way of group members dramatizing personal stories.

Personal Stories

Personal stories were told in the circle or in silence using body sculptures. A variety of methods that ranged from conversation to structured exercises were used in the circle. The one word or one phrase story generated some scenes and created a lot of fun for everyone. Once we have a story that can be put into action, a scene is created. Depending on the story once in a scene it can be expanded if warranted, explored in more depth, or left as it is.

Another method for working with personal stories is to sculpt the bodies of group members into positions that create frozen pictures or sculptures of an event in a person's life. When I use this exercise I ask the group to think of an important event in their lives, then to find the critical moment in the event, and to use the group members' bodies to recreate the moment. This exercise is a powerful tool. The sculptures draw people into the reality of the situations that they are illustrating. For example in the Downtown Group, some members had requested that we explore the theme of sexual abuse. In the one of the sculptures, Susan said to Melissa, "no not like that, haven't you ever been raped before?" Melissa replied "Yes." That was the first time that Melissa had spoken of being raped (Program notes, Jan. 10, 1990).

Trust, Responsibility, And Ethical Dilemmas

The sculpture was created in a climate of trust. The disclosure was made in what Melissa thought of as a safe place and as facilitator working in a community agency, I was bound to report the incident to the appropriate authority. But how should I respond? Melissa placed her trust in the group. Should the facilitator violate that trust by reporting the disclosure to the police or a social worker? If the trust was violated, it might be a long time before Melissa or anyone else in the group spoke out again. I struggled with these issues, sought the advice of experienced social and cultural workers, and then made my decision.

The first thing I did was to acknowledge to Melissa that I had heard her and would support her. Then I did my best to be sure that she was safe at home. Melissa appreciated that someone cared about her and assured me that she was okay now. The incident, Melissa said, had occurred a few months earlier. The perpetrator, her mother's boyfriend, was no longer around the house. I then asked Melissa if she would like to talk to a nice woman that I knew who was a counsellor at the agency where we held our drama program. Melissa agreed and the crisis was managed. However, despite Melissa 's agreement, she never followed through on meeting with the counsellor.

Melissa's disclosure was the first of many involving the young people who became part of the Downtown Group. The disclosures were all serious and at times life threatening. Tales of slashed wrists, drug overdoses, incest, sexual abuse in foster homes, neglect by parents, violence in the home and on the streets began to appear amidst the laughter of our meetings. These crises became more numerous as the young people felt that they were in an environment where they were safe. It was then that the pain of their lives was revealed in their suffering. Yet through it all our drama meetings were full of laughter. Was this the native way? Is it with moments of laughter that one manages the desperation of lives seemingly out of control? There was at times such a feeling of solidarity in the room that the only reference point I had for what I was feeling was Freire's reference to the love that one feels with women and men learning together, learning amidst oppressive conditions and, in the midst of that oppression and suffering, acknowledging each other's common humanity (Freire, 1987).

The Downtown Group were revealing the stories of their lives; the Eastside Group focused on adolescent culture, their experiences, and fantasies. Both were the stuff of popular theatre, but the stories of the Downtown Group had an urgency about them, traumatic experiences that had matured the group beyond their years. This sense of urgency was not present in the Eastside group and could explain the lack of depth in the program. Many members of the Eastside Group were in the program because they wanted to be actors, whereas most members of the Downtown Group had made a committment to using theatre to explore personal and social issues. This commitment evolved into plays that toured Alberta, performing and discussing responses with others caught in the grip of many of the same issues, responses that could, and in many cases did, evolve into action plans .

Spider in the Web of Dreams

Spider In The Web of Dreams (Spider) was created out of issues I have mentioned above. Most of the action in *Spider* took place in a high school classroom or on a street in the drag or skid row area of downtown Edmonton. The content of the play came from the lives of the group members. I did not edit that content for theatrical effect. If a scene was theatrically less interesting than it might have been but honest in its content, we always chose honesty. How would I explain to the youth that I needed to edit the stories of their lives and what value would the program have if I did? *Spider* is about the dreams that most young people have, about what they would like to do with their lives, and what happens when their dreams meet the reality of life on the street. *Spider* involves drugs, prostitution, attempted suicide, dreams, high energy, and lots of music. All of these issues were active in the lives of the group members.

The synopsis that follows will illustrate how these issues were combined to create a play.

Spider in the Web of Dreams

Scene 1:	Accompanied by slides of the area, the entire cast dances through their neighbourhood.
Scene 2:	The drug deal: The drug dealer wants his money from Pam, a high school student, but Pam hasn't had a chance to sell the hash. Pam wants more hash, and gets it, along with an ultimatum to have the money by next week. After the drug dealer leaves, Pam hears sirens, sees her friend Jet listening to a walkman, gives Jet the hash and tells her to look after it.
Scene 3:	As a young woman Melissa [Jet] dances. We hear party sounds and realize that Jet and her friends are smoking the hash.
Scene 4:	School: Everyone is present. The assignment is "What do you want to do when you graduate?" Vignettes of some students dreams are shown.
Scene 5:	The arcade: The drug dealer wants his money. Pam is looking for Jet.
Scene 6:	Back to school: Pam catches up with Jet who tells her she has smoked the hash. Pam has to have the money. She tells Jet to join her on the streets that night.
Scene 7:	The York Hotel: Pam shows Jet how to work the streets. Pam gets beaten up by a drug dealer. Jet gets raped by a customer.
Scene 8:	Jet's house: Pam has come to apologize and finds that Jet has overdosed. She phones the ambulance, then re-affirms her friendship for Jet. She tells her that they'll get counselling, they'll get through this together, it will be all right.

Although this is not a word-for-word representation of events as they actually occurred, it is an accurate portrayal of issues from the day-to-day lives of the youth in the group--youth, I might add, who were at this time making efforts to attend junior high school. Melissa, who plays Jet, was responsible for the rape scene. Susan, who played Pam, was responsible for the suicide scene. Susan (Pam) also set up the scene where she instructs Melissa (Jet) in the ways of prostitution in front of the York Hotel, an Edmonton hotel well-known for its connection to the seedy aspects of street life. The suicide scene came from Susan's direct experience. The arcade and drugs

The first performance took place at a community festival. The response was overwhelming. The audience recognized the actors as members of their community and they recognized the issues of their community being acted out on stage. Many of the audience members had never seen a play before and responded with shouts such as, "You tell him Susan." The running commentary continued throughout the performance. This familiarity, the surprise of the audience, and the moments of comic relief sprinkled throughout the show added a lighthearted tone to the post-performance discussion. Nonetheless, the audience's response was a testimony to the integrity of the performance. Community members saw the issues of their community reflected back to them on stage. In relation to later performances/discussions, this one did lack substance. This lack was directly related to our developing skills and was to change as we gained experience.

Summary

The issues of both the Eastside Group and the Downtown Group were important for each group. The work of the Downtown Group was honest and straightforward. The Eastside Group, on the other hand, performed an exaggerated version of their reality. The performance was not a straight forward presentation of issues. Much of our work took place inside the school and was coloured by that environment. When the students "came to drama," it was as if they were finally free. It took most of our energy to settle the group. Trying to focus the group on the project at hand was a major challenge. The school supported our work but for the most part saw it as a drama program. Most of the staff were not familiar with popular theatre and did not understand the nature of the program. My offers to discuss the program at a staff meeting were not accepted. We were very much an isolated program.

The Downtown Group, on the other hand, was supported by the agency that first hosted the program. The staff had more of an understanding of the nature of the program and referred youth to us. The Downtown Group were able to completely overcome the period of creative chaos and went on to tackle substantial issues.

The Eastside group did not completely pass through the stage of creative chaos. They did, however, manage to deal with some serious issues that were disclosed in moments of trust and honesty. The Eastside program continued for several more years but never more than scratched the surface of serious social issues.

Members of the Eastside Group who indicated that they wanted to pursue the issues of their social reality with more seriousness and in more depth were asked if they would like to join the Downtown Group. This might not have been the best thing to do, to have graduated the interested youth into the Downtown Group. Eastside School though is a junior high school, and by the time some of the group members declared an interest in exploring their issues in more depth they were ready to leave junior high. In fact, some students stopped attending school part way through junior high.

In reflection the Eastside Group, given the above conditions, accomplished a lot. They managed to deal with some serious issues, create plays out of their work, performed at youth festivals and for their own school, and entered into discussion with their peers and other youth about issues that impacted their social reality.

The work of the Downtown Group, however, had an honesty that was absent from that of the Eastside Group. This sense of integrity when dealing with social issues and the feeling of mutual support that was developing among group members enabled this group to take their issues to the community at large. In their second year of operation, the group requested that we continue to meet all summer rather than stop in June and begin again in September as had been our practice. This desire by the group members to begin a more intensive exploration of their social issues and take them out to the community led to the period which I call "Expanding the Dialogue." The next chapter will be concerned with the expanding dialogue between the Downtown Group and the greater community.

CHAPTER VI
EXPANDING THE DIALOGUE

Introduction

Following a few well-received community performances and some discussion about the joys of camping, members of the Downtown Group made the decision to take *Spider* on the road. Performances were booked at the following central Alberta locations: Grand Prairie Native Friendship Centre, the St. Paul Boys' and Girls' Club, the Bonnyville Native Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Centre, and Camp Manninwanis in Saint Paul. The audience reaction to the performances was a testimony to the honesty of the performances. The problems of drugs, alcohol, substance abuse, prostitution, and suicide were not new to the audience members. The performance at the Rehabilitation Centre (Aug. 9, 1990) was particularly moving. We sat in a circle with the 30 or 40 audience members--who were clients and staff of the centre--and discussed the issues of the play. Many of the audience members, having had direct experience with the way of life that we were illustrating on stage, were acutely aware of the issues involved. Performing a play about issues that the audience has an intimate connection with leaves little room for dramatic licence. The performance itself becomes a testimony to the integrity of the group process. One audience member commented, "I have done drugs in my life, but I have never seen its full circle as we you have shown us." (Jeff, Boyle McCauley News. Feb. 1992). What the audience member implied was that the play had shown him and others that the journey drugs, alcohol, and street life can take a person on can result in suicide. In an interview with a local radio station, CHLW Radio, the announcer asked Don, one of the group members, how audiences were reacting to the play. Don put it this way:

> We went to a school once [Ben Calf Robe School in Edmonton, June, 1990] and we did our play and two kids, after they seen our suicide scene, they said they went through that just a couple of days before and that's some of the kind of responses we get... (August 8, 1990).

In most cases audience response was heartfelt and supportive. Up to this point we were careful to perform for our own community. Our community was not a geographic one but a community of experience. The fact that we were able to make the kind of connections we did with a variety of audiences is a disturbing comment on the social reality that colours the lives of many people, in this case many native or First Nations people. The dimensions of this reality will unfold as the narrative progresses.

After one performance at Camp Manniwanas and a few days of camp life, we returned to Edmonton. An important relationship was established at Camp Mannawanis. The camp, sponsored by the St. Paul Native Friendship Centre, was to provide the youth with an important link to Cree culture. Over the next few years we visited the camp on two other occasions, performed for the campers, took part in cultural ceremonies and rituals, picked Sweetgrass, and had Sweats with a Cree Elder. These and other experiences had a profound effect on the youth's pride in themselves and their heritage and added a previously unexplored dimension of their identity. This tour and subsequent tours were important and powerful group building exercises. After 7 days travelling and performing, much of the time in a 12-passenger Van, we had come to know each other well. We established a travel routine, each person had assigned responsibilities, and we had a small travel budget. The more we came to know each other, the more we shared stories and the more we learned of each others' background.

However, before I go any further, it would be appropriate to introduce some of the group members. For the purposes of this study I will introduce youth that stayed with the group for some time. It is the long-term relationships that are the most useful for this dissertation. Some youth I came to know more than others. I am privileged and humbled to have the knowledge that I do with respect to the young people in this narrative and their backgrounds. I came to this project with a strong sense of solidarity; but as I came to know the young people and learned a little about their backgrounds, the sense of solidarity that I felt deepened and, more importantly, was reinforced with humility. As a youth, despite the inner city environment that I lived in, I did not suffer the desperate conditions that some of these youth have had to endure. Throughout this project I have endeavoured as much as humanly possible to suspend my judgemental faculties and respect the realities of the youth who made the project possible. In all of the interviews I conducted, each informant had full knowledge of the purpose of the interview. The informants were also each made aware that they could refuse to answer any question they did not feel comfortable answering. The voices of group members who joined the group later in the process will also be heard as the narrative progress.

In *Spider,* Susan played the part of Pam, a part she created out of her life experiences. Just before we went on tour, AADAC, one of our funders, was conducting an evaluation/description of the program. The interviewer asked Susan the following question:

> How do you decide what ideas or messages you want to talk about? [Susan replied]: You just think about it closely. That last scene we just put on, the suicide, I was the one that thought of that. Something like that happened in my life, right, and I wanted to do something about that particular thing so we put our minds together and came up with that scene (Goldblat & Howarth, 1990).

Susan was fourteen at this time and had already experienced much of what took place in the play.

Susan's Story

The following interview took place in December of 1995. Susan had been associated with Inner City for 8 years at the time of this interview. The information that Susan reveals in the interview reflects that long association. It was in a climate of mutual trust and respect that Susan shared the details of her life. I began the interview by asking by asking Susan about her mother's experience as a child in the Blue Quills Residential School. The structural and cultural violence of many Indian residential schools has been well-documented over the past 5-10 years.

Joe:

Did your mother tell you stories about the residential school?

Susan:
She told me some stories. She wasn't too much into detail. She didn't really like talking about it.. She used to tell about...[how] they'd get a licking if you were speaking your language or something, as if you were bad. They didn't considered that bad to talk Cree and so other things, like weird things. They feed them that well either.

Joe:
Did she graduate from there or did she leave?

Susan:
I don't know. She didn't go that high up into education. She knows how to spell and stuff... . It would have been about the Grade 6 level. I don't know. She got sick while she was in there. She got pneumonia, and they had to take her away. Her Mom and Dad took her home, cause they wouldn't let her stay there. And she was raised the native way, I guess. She used to hunt and fish and trap and everything like that....with a horse and a dog.

Joe:
That must have been nice.

Susan:
She liked it. She missed it when she lost it. I forget how she lost it. She told me some of these stories a long time ago, but a lot of times when she was drunk. I don't remember all of them.

Joe:
How old were you when you started drinking and maybe started sniffing?

Susan:
I think it was a combination of both. No, my first experience with anything was drugs. I'm trying to remember. Yeah, I think it was with drugs because my brother Keith used to...like he's older than me...he's like 3 years older than me. And when I was around 9, 10 or 11, he used to be smoking drugs and stuff, you know, dope, and he'd get us stoned all the time. Well, when my Mom wasn't home. She refused to do drugs. He used to get some.... I don't know where he got it from...a lot of times he ended up getting me to go and get roaches [the butts of marijuana cigarettes]. He'd make it a big thing. All four of us or all three of us would go digging around by the Coliseum, by that one bar, they have there.

Joe:
The Forum?

Susan:
Yeah, the Forum. In there they have those plants and those trees and bushes and people would go outside, they'd smoke a joint, go back into the bar, and leave behind the roaches. So we used to go there, dig around, find roaches, take them home, and at night put them in our home-made pipe.

Joe:
And you were 10 at that time?

Susan:
Yeah. I guess that was my first experience. Then we moved to Ryley and I got into some drinking.

Joe:
Now you were taken..... You had been in and out of foster homes for a lot of your life. Ryley was a foster home?

Susan:
No. Anyways, I ended up living down there for about a year. I was like, 11. That was when I had my next experience...with gas...gasoline? We had our own gas thing, like for tractors? And my brother would go there and siphon gas out of there, and come back with a bag and give it to me. Like, I was drinking before that ... .

Joe:
How old were you when you went to the first foster home?

Susan:
I can't really remember. I was talking to that lady that narced [phoned the police or other authority such as a social worker] on us.

Joe:
How did she narc on you? What did she do?

Susan:
Well my Mom found that it was her that told. She phoned welfare, I guess, and said that my Mom was drinking all the time and leaving us home by ourselves. I think I was around 7.

Joe:
In the first foster home?

Susan:
But she said that I was older. I'm not too sure. But, I think that's about the first time. I get my ages confused.

Joe:
Was it the first foster home that you had some not very nice experiences in?

Susan:
The first foster home was great. It was the Hamiltons. I always remember them cause they were so nice to us. They treated us like their own children. I don't even know if they had children of their own. I think they did. Anyways,

they treated us like that. They were really nice to us. They had a lot of toys and stuff. There were a lot of things that we didn't have. We played around with them a lot. I don't really remember it though. Maybe it was too good. I don't really see the logic in that.

Joe:
Yeah right, the other things that impact you more, you remember. The things that weren't quite so good you remember clearly.

Susan:
The one thing that I remember clearly though.... She gave me this present. It was a walking doll. It was about as big as I was. I didn't know how to walk with it... . I liked it. I don't know what happened to it. I think I lost it in the second foster home.

Joe:
When was the next time you were in a foster home?

Susan:
That was the next foster home.

Joe:
Right away?

Susan:
They came and took us to a different foster home.

Joe:
Why were you moved?

Susan:
I think they didn't have enough room or something. Or else, I don't know, they just felt it was time for us to go, so that we wouldn't get so attached or something. I don't know. But they had to move us to a different foster home. And I guess that, from what I hear, there wasn't many. We were like, had to be moved there because they would be running out of places and stuff. And I figure that must be why they did that. They put us in a foster home, but I just remember... . I don't even remember what the foster mother looked like. I just remember what the foster dad looked like. He was a black guy with curly hair...an afro.

Joe:
What happened in that home that made it not so nice?

Susan:
I don't know. They always kept us at a separate table, like, they kept us there for a quite a while.... But they treated us different. We weren't, like, theirs. They used to get us to sit on mats. We weren't allowed to sit on furniture there. They thought we were dirty or something. Their kids were allowed to. They had two kids of their own. They were allowed to do whatever. Me and my brother, even though it was carpeted, we had to get carpeted mats to sit on the carpet to watch TV. Where's the logic in that? And, if we were bad, they used to use plastic hockey sticks and hit us on our bottoms. With the hockey stick....if we were bad. That's what I remember. We used to always have to sit at the counter. You know like they had the kitchen with the counter part, and then over there they had a round table by the verandah, or whatever you call it. And we used to have to sit at the counter all the time. They said that they didn't have enough room for us. So always the family, the mother and father and the two girls would sit there, while me and my brother would sit at the counter eating by ourselves. There was a lot of things that were bad. Like we didn't have enough to eat. Sometimes, we might have got sour milk. Sometimes...we'd always have to use baking powder to brush our teeth...it's supposed to be good for you, but me and my brother had to use baking powder and their two kids had toothpaste. And then when they were done with the toothpaste, they'd give us whatever was left over. And we would have to squeeze and everything...like almost have to break open a vein to get some toothpaste. And whenever the foster mother would go for a shopping trip, she'd leave one of us behind with the foster dad, and my brother says that when he was left behind, the foster dad used to rape him.

Joe:
Rape him? How old was your brother?

Susan:
I don't even remember. I think I was at least 8 or 9. That's what they say I was. And that would make Keith about 11or 12. And then when I was left at home, he used to get me to give him head [oral sex]. And he'd take me up to his bedroom, and sit [me] on the toilet and [tell me to] give him head.

Joe:
Like, oral sex?

Susan:
And then after that, he'd take me down to the kitchen and give me a treat. Like [he would say] that was good...have a treat. It would be something that I wasn't allowed to have. Then he'd send me out to play.

Joe:
What did you think of it at the time? Did you think anything of it?

Susan:
I didn't feel comfortable with it. I didn't like it. I thought it was part of growing up. I guess I knew in a way that it was wrong. I remember telling him "No" one time. I didn't want to do it. So he tried to convince me but I kept telling him no. Then he took me downstairs to the kids. Then he'd get mad at me, and he took me downstairs, and he gave me a banana which tasted better.

Joe:
Does that bother you when you think back on it?

Susan:
Yeah. He was being an asshole in doing that. That was sick. I kind of remember things about that place.

Joe:
You've told me stories about living with your mother and waiting outside bars for your mother when you were younger, waiting hours for her to come out and that sort of thing. Did that happen when you were really young? Or was that... .

Susan:
That was after the foster homes....about the time I met you, twelve or thirteen. About there. I don't know. She used to get me to wait over here; it was either at the York or the International [two bars on Edmonton's drag or tenderloin area]... when she was with Ross, the guy that we moved to Ryley with. Before, they used to give us me and my nephew money and we'd go to that restaurant in the lobby and get French fries and play music until they'd come out, which was like, a couple of hours. But, as time went on, she started taking me there by myself, cause I was the youngest, and rather than leave me at home, she'd take me with her after we'd go shopping. After we'd go cash the [welfare] cheque and do all the running around, pay the bills and everything, then she'd go to the bars and say, "O.K. Baby, I'm going to run in for a few minutes. I'll be out in 5 or 10 minutes, O.K.?" O.K. Right. And she'd be in there for about half an hour to an hour. Sometimes, the hookers would sit and talk with me, and they'd say, "I'll wait here with you" and stuff like that. One of them even went right in to try and find my Mom. But I didn't describe her good enough, so she couldn't find her. Then after half an hour, she said, "I got to go do a trick, eh? I can't stand around here. I'll hope you'll be OK." She asked me if I would be OK for a little while and I said yeah, it's not the first time. And so she left to do her thing.

Joe:
Did anybody ever approach you to pick you up while you were hanging around waiting for your Mom?

Susan:
That's a trick I learned about that living around here. I learned that like if you don't look at them, they know to leave you alone. I guess, in a way, it's all in eye contact. And sometimes even then, the way they looked at you, you know, kind of thing, and you just sort of ignore them, look up in the air, down on the ground, look anywhere but over there and they'll leave you alone. Sometimes though, they can be persistent. I used to have some fun with them,

Joe:
Oh, you did? How?

Susan:
Well, when I wasn't waiting for my Mom at the bar, when I was over anywhere by myself, and sometimes I'd get a car or van that would follow me, like I'd be walking down a couple of blocks, and I'd notice that it would be following me or else going back and forth sort of thing? Finally I'd get sick of it...I'd just sort of...as it's going, like if it's going this way to come towards me, like to try and pull over? I'd turn around and go the other way. And then I'd go round the corner or down the alley. I'd always wait until finally they got the point that I didn't want nothing to do with them and they'd sort of leave me alone and give up the chase. I'd have fun with it though, and be running along and get all excited. I'd be across the street. They'd turn around so they'd be on the same side as me, going the same direction, eh? And when they'd go to do that, I'd cross the street and go the opposite direction, so that when they'd come around there I'm going...(laughter)...it's funny. I had fun.

Joe:
So is that around the same time as, I remember you told me a story once ...that your mother had come home and brought you a jar of solvent as a treat.

Susan:
When I was in the family group, they called that my chief enabler. She was more like, supporting my habit, and instead of trying to say "no you can't do this that," she was always trying to be on my good side. "Oh, you kids be quiet, Susan is sleeping." She's hung over, she's got a headache. That's the chief enabler. ...And she'd go, "Well, I'll go buy you a beer." That's the chief enabler. She was my chief enabler. You know for my birthday, she'd get me a gram of hash.

Joe:
For your birthday? How old were you?

Susan:
Well, it would depend, for my 13 birthday, she got me that... . Like I used to get it [solvent] off my brother, and he'd get it off someone else. And they'd buy it from

the store. It would cost a buck seventy five for a little thing. And so finally she says, "Well"....like I was feeling sick, like I was sick, and so she went out and got me.... I came with her eh? and showed her which one. I thought she was just going to get me a little can, and she got me, like they didn't have these before like they had at that time, it was a jumbo can of solvent, a really big thing. It must have been at least a liter. It was big. She brought that home. And she'd give me just a little bit. Not enough, not what I thought was enough, but she used to do that.

Joe:
You were 13 or 14 at this time?

Susan:

Yeah.

At this point I reminded Susan of the time when she tried to stab herself with a hunting knife. I managed to take the knife from Susan and prevent her from harming herself. I also reminded Susan of the time that she told me that her mother made deals with the bootlegger. Susan's mother offered the bootlegger Susan's sexual favours in exchange for alcohol. She replied,

Susan:
I don't remember it. When I get in tough shape, I black out.

Joe:
I think that was the same when I took the knife off you. You were going to stab yourself.

Susan:
I don't remember that. I remember going with that guy on my own, just so that we could get something to drink. My Mom would say, "Oh, I want to get something to drink." And what Mom wants, I would do what you can to get it, right? Cause everyone wants love.

Joe:
I know that through some of this period, I guess you worked the streets yourself, off and on through this period.

Susan:
Yeah. Most of the tricks I did were ones that I guess my niece knew. I didn't try to go too much with other people. Like, people I didn't know? And a lot of it was too with older guys. I don't know. You have to be careful. It all depends on if I was drunk or not. If I was drunk, then I was careless. If I was sober, then I

was more scared. I read this thing, at my sister's, it talks about how a girl feels when they're standing on the street corner, about the things that are going through her, and kind of, why she's doing it. And the worry that, "Is this trick going to be the wrong one?" Is he going to be the one that, you know, the possibility that you might not come back? Because it all depends on the guy, eh? I don't know, I can't explain it. But it shows how a girl feels. They're worried. Like it can make you money, but is this, like you gotta be careful. Cause if you're not, you might end up in a ditch instead of coming back. And at the end when it's over and done and the guy pays you his dues, then you know that you made it. You survived one more time.

Joe:
I guess it's somewhere in that time while I met you. I guess I met you when you were between 12 and 13, so it was right in the middle of that stuff.

Susan:
I think it was 13, cause you gave me a birthday present at 14. Or a birthday cake.

As we were talking, I noticed Susan's arm and was reminded of the times that she slashed attempting to commit suicide or crying out for help. I asked Susan about it..

Joe:
Well, I was just looking at your arm now, and like, you've got seven different ...is it seven?

Susan:
That's with a knife. I was trying to do that again one time. Eight, I don't know. There must be like about five. Some of these I didn't do too well. They were just a scratch. But if you count the ones that required stitches, six of them required stitches, and the other ones just healed....one, two, three, four. I wasn't too good with my left.

Joe:
But you kept coming to drama and through it all you put yourself into the plays that we made-- *Spider, Silent Cries, They Can't be Trusted.* You've been through the stuff that's in all of those plays.... Through the plays, your intelligence shone through and your insight, like in the talk backs... . You were able to handle all of the questions from people. No matter what the question, you always managed to have an answer for it, even if it was a question that wasn't really connected with what we were doing.You politely answered it.... (personal communication, December 18, 1995).

I have shared more of Susan's background than I was aware of in the early stages of this project (1990). Susan revealed herself little by little as we became more familiar and closer as a group.The portions of the interview that I have reproduced summarized those revelations. The reality that Susan has told of is all too common. As the project developed, I continued to be humbled by the resiliency of the youth in facing the difficult the conditions of their lives.

Melissa

Melissa was 13 when I met her. Melissa is Cree and her family is from the Wainright/Hobbema area. Melissa played the part of Jet in *Spider*. She was responsible for the creation of the rape scene. The scene began with a sculpture illustrating an important moment in her life. The resulting disclosure was acknowledged and followed up using the resources of the agency that hosted our program. After the disclosure, Melissa agreed to an appointment but never contacted the counsellor. She did, though, assure me that she was safe at home. About 2 weeks before we went on tour and about 3 months after the disclosure, Melissa disappeared. Her mother couldn't locate her and reported her missing to the city police. At the last minute we asked Gloria, from one of our other programs, to take Melissa's place. Making such a fundamental change in the group could have been a problem. At that time, though, we had no choice. The tour was booked.

In fact, throughout the development and performance of *Spider* and of later plays, there were times when group members were unable to continue with the project. The major themes that we have worked with--street life, prostitution, substance abuse, family violence, and racism--form part of the reality of many inner city youth. Gloria and other youth who subsequently joined the group had some experience with the reality of those themes and were able to work their way into the group without too much difficulty. But we were worried about Melissa. What had happened to her?

Over the next few months we heard through the grapevine that Melissa was staying with friends (here one night, there the other). This information gave us cause for concern--a young girl of 14 should not be alone on the street. Melissa eventually contacted us and began to come to drama again. That placed us in a difficult position.

Officially, a missing person's report on Melissa had been filed with the city police. Legally, I was bound to notify the police if or when we had contact with Melissa. The agency where we were meeting stuck by this rule and caused quite a stir when they discovered that Melissa was meeting with us. They refused to allow her in their building as long as Melissa was listed as missing. I realized the sensitive nature of the situation but at the same time, Melissa was on the street and in danger of being pulled into street life. I suspected that she was close to prostitution and thought it best to maintain contact with her rather than drive her away. If I phoned the police, the other group members would see me as a "rat" and never be able to place their trust in me again. At the same time, I could not place the entire program in jeopardy and was bound to respect the policies of the agency that was hosting our program. We struggled over what to do.

The first thing we did, together with our volunteer native liaison, was to establish communication between Melissa and her mother. Melissa's mother had contacted me in an effort to locate her. When Melissa contacted us, I asked her if I could let her mother know that I was in contact with her. Melissa agreed. Next I found a new place to hold our weekly meetings, thus solving the conflict with the agency which originally hosted the program. I then called Child Welfare and explained the situation (personal communication, Vera Peters, December 5, 1990). The worker at child welfare agreed with our strategy and understood that if they apprehended Melissa, at the first opportunity she had, Melissa would run again and then we would probably not find her. Child Welfare notified the police and the police agreed to the strategy. We made every effort to get Melissa off the street. She did not want to go home because of the treatment that she received from her mother's boyfriend. He was the suspected perpetrator of the abuse that Melissa had been enduring. After several discussions with Melissa's mother and an attempt by myself and our native liaison to get Melissa and her family together we were unsuccessful. Melissa did, when mother and boyfriend broke up, eventually go home. However, damage had been done (program notes, December 4, 1990 through January 12, 1991).

Melissa had a taste of street life. She had become friends with street people (prostitutes, pimps, drug dealers) and some of them had given her a place to stay when she needed it. Melissa's level of formal education was about Grade 5 or 6. Although she was only 14, her maturity level in some ways was that of an 18 year old. Street life can be alluring: parties, drugs, booze, friends, excitement, and money. This can be quite a temptation to someone who does not have a lot to look forward to. This temptation was to plague Melissa for the years to come. She drifted in and out of the drama group but seemed unable to maintain a serious commitment. Other group members had similar experiences to Melissa's: however, it seemed that they could see the results of street life more clearly than she and they fought harder to break old habits.

Tom

Tom, like Melissa, was unable to maintain a serious commitment to the group despite his years of association. Tom, an aboriginal youth from the Sturgeon Lake Reserve in west central Alberta, was 13 or 14 when I first met him. Tom lived with his stepfather, a white man who worked out of town when he could and gave me the impression that he drank too much when he couldn't. The stepfather seemed to be in town much more than he was out. Tom's mother, a First Nations woman from the Sturgeon Lake area, who I later discovered was actually his aunt, for the most part worked a steady job and didn't drink to excess. Tom used to say, "I tell people my mom's a stripper." In actuality she worked in a furniture repair shop stripping the finish from furniture. Tom's brothers and sisters were quite rough and had serious problems with substance abuse and violence. Tom's biological mother, I later learned, lived in a trailer in the Sturgeon Lake area. She had a serious problem with substance abuse and Tom later confided to me that he could not live with his mother because of her problems with substance abuse.

I met Tom in the drama program at Eastside School and introduced him to the Downtown Group towards the end of the 1989/1990 academic year. Tom never seemed to put a lot of himself into the work, even though he enjoyed it and was quite familiar with the subject matter. He did, however, add a humorous dimension to the serious issues we were exploring. Despite the seriousness of the issues, our meetings were usually filled with laughter and high energy. In our plays, music was added to this mix and the group tempered the darkest of issues with a touch of humour.

We will come back to Tom, later but for now it is time to meet Don, another member of the Downtown Group. Don, an aboriginal youth, at 19 was older than most of the other youth when he first came to the drama group. Don is openly gay and was working as a male prostitute when I first came into contact with him. He is a warm caring person and played a central role our drama group. Perhaps though, it is best to let Don introduce himself.

Don

Joe:
Don, ...you're originally from B.C. You spoke Chilicouten [as your first language]?

Don:
It's Williams Lake which is in northern B.C., ... I didn't speak English until I was 7 years old. ...just after my birth my grandmother took me from my mother. [She] ... stated to my mother that my older brothers and sisters were not very positive. They did a lot of drinking, they never worked, they never knew their language, they never knew their history... . When she took me she intended that I would have my language, I would have the ceremonies, I would have the teachings of my heritage, of my people, the Chilicouten... . So I grew up with her..."where the road would end"... . From that point you would have to travel two days walking to this small cabin that my grandmother had. ... I was told a lot of stories... I was told a lot of ceremonies, many different songs, a lot of prayers, different things that have happened in my family's life. A lot of these were instilled in me, and when my grandmother talked to me or my granddad, they would talk to me like I am talking to you, very casually,very normal, and it didn't matter if I was listening or not. I could just be playing or doing whatever. They would just talk. But they knew that, my grandmother called it planting the seed. Planting the seeds happened in my youth, in the first six years of my life. But my life didn't drastically change until I was 6. I was supposed to just stay with my mother and father for the summer that I was 6. ... My dad worked 3 weeks out of the month and the fourth week my Mom and Dad would spend drunk. ... I was only 6, so they would go into the bar. They would be in the bar and I would be sitting in the car... . That summer, at the end of the summer, plans changed, because my mother wanted to collect welfare for me...and the only way she could do that was if I was in a residential school, or if I was in her custody. So she, in September, when I turned 6 was when I was placed in a residential school. But I didn't fit in at the residential school because when I went there I was the only kid ... that went there not speaking English... . When I was six, in the residential school, that was where we had a supervisor

named Brian that supervised all 30 of the kids. He stayed on the floor with us. He had a small room. It was more of a closet as well, where he had a bed and a small TV...it was a huge bed. ...When I was on the floor with thirty other kids, I thought it was odd that these special kids were able to stay in Brian's room, were able to sleep in Brian's room. I thought it was really unusual. I thought it was for special kids...if you were really good, if you were really nice you could have a treat and sleep with Brian. And I never understood what that entailed... .To sleep with Brian... . I even disclosed to an adult, to Darlene, who I thought I trusted and who spoke Chilicouten and who....I told her in Chilicouten that when I'm in his room, that what special means is that you get touched. And I told her that when you're special, you get touched by Brian, when you're special you get to sleep with him, and when you're special he's naked and you're naked in bed together. And she was dumbfounded. She was thrown by this....by me telling her. And I told her in a casual way. It was like, this is what happens. This is what he means when you're special . And that was my interpretation of special from then throughout my life. The word "special" never meant the original content or meaning but special meant you slept with someone naked, and that was what made you special. That was the only way you got...that was the only way I could make Brian love me, or anybody else, was if I was "special"with them.

Joe:
How old were you when you left that school?

Don:
I was 10... .

Joe:
You went back to your parents then?

Don:
No, I went to live with my mother and father. [They] had really dived into their alcoholism. ...When I left the residential school , I moved in with my older sister.

Joe:
How long did you live with your sister for?

Don:
I was 14... . In this home I had my brother-in-law, my two nephews that were older than me, sexually abusing me and that was why, initially, I opened the [liquor] cabinet. And that was when I started. And then my sister physically abusing me, so when I drank, it was because that was the only way I could handle this. Three people crawling into my bed, and then my sister beating me up. What are you supposed to do? So when I was drinking....at ten, one of the only things that was within my reach was the Jack Daniels... . And as I got older, it was

drinking every day. I would sneak my bottle of J.D. in my school bag, and take it to school... .

Joe:
What grade was this?

Don:
At 10 I didn't take it to school. It wasn't till later, maybe about 13 or fourteen. So I was in grade seven. But six and seven was when I was really drinking, and 11 [years old] when I got really diving into it. So it was like, in those years, I drank almost every day. It was almost a normal thing.

Joe:
How long did you drink like that?

Don:
For the full 4 years that I stayed with my sister.

Joe:
How old were you when you first came to Edmonton?

Don:
I was 18 when I came to Edmonton.

Joe:
When did you stop drinking? ... When I met you in Edmonton, were you drinking then?

Don:
No. I wasn't drinking that much. Not as much as I used to. When I was 15 was when I quit. I quit when I was fifteen, in the sense that I cut down to weekends, which is quitting. It was the way I thought of quitting, cutting down to weekends.

Joe:
Why did you come to Edmonton?

Don:
I heard a lot of stories from my brothers about Edmonton. "I lived in Edmonton. This is what I did. This is what happened." It was the land of opportunity. It was big lights. ...You could party, you could become somebody. When I first came to Edmonton I stayed with someone who was my best friend in high school, and I came to Edmonton to live with my friend Lillian and her husband Brian. ...But as soon as the money ran out, that was when my friend Lillian kicked me out and said, "You're out of here. I can't have you stay here any more."

Joe:
Then you lived on the street?

Don:
Yeah ... I was on the streets. I had no money. All I had was the clothes on my back, literally... . I had nowhere to go. I didn't know anybody in Edmonton. And It wasn't till January 1990 that I connected with Inner City...with you. And Inner City drama. ...At 19 I was very lonely...had no family...had no real friends that I connected with...had no real connections with anybody... . I was very mature, but people my age weren't. They were fairly [involved in] drugs and alcohol, [and going to] party. So it was mixing with those kind of people and I couldn't. I had been there and I would do what I could not to fall back. So when I connected in 1990 with Inner City Drama... one of the major influences[was] joining the Downtown group...one of the major positive ones, because there I had people that I met every week.

Joe:
Wednesdays.

Don:
Wednesdays, yeah. In the Downtown Group...just doing skits every week and putting them together.... It was me expressing myself. It was me having input to expressing myself with other people and working with them. And working with different people's ideas and perspectives, and through the sharing with them, and that was a lot of sharing of our lives, this is what's happened in my life, this is what's gone on, and this is what I've been through. To share that, it was a bonding process with Susan and other people that were in the group at that time, and it was a bonding experience that hasn't broken, even to today.... On Wednesday night I was not lonely. I wasn't alone. I was with people that cared about me. I was with people that cared about what I felt. I was with people that cared about what I had to say. I was with people that listened.... And because of those bonds, and that safety....it was like a safe environment to share. I could talk about being abused, I could talk about being gay, I could talk about myself, in that safe environment where I knew that I was with people that loved and cared for me... . It was like me saying this is a part of my life, the sexual abuse of my life....this is the alcohol abuse of my life...these parts of my life and what they did. And I found it quite touching that they would take it in and embrace it and say that "Wow, that's the same thing that happened to me" and not judge me.... And a lot of it was building of relationships with the people that were in the Downtown Group. And a lot of the friendships that grew out of these [relationships] were very strong. And because of those friendships, that was what made the place so powerful. When we started creating scenes and making them, the scenes were from us. They were from within our lives; they were from within our experiences evoked, molded, and shaped by us. It was all of us sharing and opening up, taking

> that abuse, the alcohol or the prostitution, taking that and rather than discarding it and saying it was bad, it was blah, blah, blah, but taking it and saying, how can we show this to ourselves? How can we open this up where we can reveal it? Where we reveal it to others in a safe way? A lot of the skits and stuff were more for each other. When we did the skits I expressed myself: my sexual abuse, my alcohol, but rather than throwing it away, it was embracing it and saying, this was reality. This is what happened. And a lot of the issues at that time was the prostitution, was suicide, working with the street life as far as drugs, as far as what is it that happens in the inner city that can affect you in a negative way.
>
> Joe:
> You've been through all of those issues, I think. You were discussing tonight, working as a prostitute.
>
> Don:
> Yeah. It was the time when I had left Lillian and my first experience as far as working the streets. It sounds kind of simple, but it came quite easy. Working was making money, it was quick cash, it was a lot of cash, and with that I would be able to party and have fun and late nights and that lifestyle was one that was easy to fall into. And it was easy to do. It was easy money. And working the streets became easy because when I was a child, there were these men that told me that I was special, that told me that they loved me and this was how they showed affection, and they cared about me and this was how they showed it. So when I worked Bellamy Hill [a pick up spot for male prostitutes], it was men showing that they loved me, that they cared and this was how they showed their affection. And on top of that I got money for it.... And it was like I knew that somebody wanted me and that somebody wanted me bad enough to pay. And it was love and affection ...that's what love is. And I even had a boyfriend, I never realized it at the time, but who was pimping me. And that was an awakening for me... . I was working the streets while I was at Inner City Drama. (personal communication, December 22, 1995)

At the time of the first tour, Don wanted to change the direction of his life but he did not have the means. He put it this way, "I welcomed the tours because I would have somewhere to sleep" (personal communication, December 22, 1995).

The experience of touring created a solid group. They were itching for more performances. From the very beginning I attempted to be clear with myself and the group members as to why we were performing. I asked the group: when the dialogue that we have with each other in our weekly meetings is expanded to include the greater community, what does that mean? Why should we reach out to the community? Why should we perform *Spider in the Web of Dreams* ? The play shows the conflicts that develop when the joy of our dreams meets the reality of life on the street. Why is it important to share our story with an audience? The general response was that we performed to create an awareness of the reality some people are trapped in and as the group developed, to let others know that there is a way out. Don explained in a 1990 newspaper interview,

> The play's message is if you have a dream then pursue it no matter what your predicament. The spider [drugs, alcohol, and prostitution] comes between you and your dream (Holeman, May 25, 1990).

In an interview 5 years later, I asked Don why he thought it was important for us to perform for audiences such as those at the Fringe. He said,

> Those scenes were powerful for us and could not help but be powerful for the audience. And for us to share that with them and say, this is our reality and this is what happens in the inner city of Edmonton, your inner city. ... was very important to the audience (personal communication, December 22, 1995).

Melissa, in 1990, said she performed the play to "get people off the streets and to stop people from using drugs." Susan added "drugs can mess up your friends' lives and get you into a whole bunch of trouble" (Holeman, 1990).

For Tom, the play showed the audience that "This is what we think the streets are like and what people are doing and what they can be doing and what they don't have to do" (Holeman, 1990). Getting the story out dominated our work during this period. Alternative responses to the situations in our plays did not seem to be as urgent as telling the story. Post performance discussions during this period dealt with breaking the hold of the streets. In reflection, analysis focused more on the behaviours of the victims rather than looking at alternative behaviours. As the program developed, alternative responses to the situations we were portraying began to become more of a focus of our work.

> Lorne, who joined the group later on in its development, explained why he thought it was important to perform. Lorne said, [When we perform] and these people [the audience] see it and they like it and then you've got people saying "wow" the same thing happened to me at home. You can talk to them and you can give them advice and you can feel like

> you're actually doing something not just bitching and moaning (personal communication December 21, 1995).

Advice quite often took the form of story telling. In our plays, for example, rather than offer direct advice actors would recount the experience of characters in the play and their responses to the situations illustrated. Audience members could then draw their own messages from the play. In the words of one young audience member at Camp Manniwanis, "The play shows that there is a way out. You're not alone" (personal communication August, 1991}There were occasions when the advice took on a more direct tone such as it did at a performance of *Spider* at Ben Calf Robe School in Edmonton. Following the discussion period, two youths about 13 or 14 came up to Susan who in one scene of *Spider* had explored the issue of suicide. One girl said that her friend had tried to do that a few days before and she had to call 911 (Jeff,1992). The girl was visibly upset and spoke to Susan for some time. They both seemed to feel better after the sharing of experiences.

For the most part, in post-performance discussions with our own community there was more an acknowledgement of the reality that, in turn, led to an analysis of the situation or as one audience member put it, "looking for a way out." People seemed to think that these things are happening to them alone and they themselves are to blame. Susan put it this way: "I never thought I could do anything right. I thought I was a failure at everything... " (Howarth and Goldblat, 1990).

For the group, the fallacy of this thinking--where the oppressed blame themselves for the results of their own oppression--was revealed through continued story telling and dramatization. For the audience, and this is why it was so important for us to perform for our own community, the fallacy of this thinking was revealed in the performances. It was revealed in the sense that both audience and actors, through storytelling and discussion, realized that the abuse and desperation that coloured their lives also coloured the lives of others in the same way. Group members and audience members had the opportunity to see their problems from social, ethnic, or class dimensions. Following a performance one young audience member at the Edmonton Young Offender Center said, "We need to find ways to be united like you showed in your play" (personal communication, September 1994). The roots of the social problems that were illustrated in our plays could often be traced to the structural violence of the colonial experience.

The youths' reasons for performing were typical of the discussions we had throughout the project before deciding to perform for a particular audience. When we were asked to perform at Edmonton's 1990 Fringe Festival, the questions about performance took on a new slant. The Fringe audience in general was not part of the community that we usually performed for. Would we be placing the young people's lives on display for others to gawk at? Would we be placing the youth at risk? What if an over-zealous theatre critic, not familiar with the nature of the work, criticized the production and destroyed the group's newly acquired confidence? These questions added a new dimension to our reflections on performance. We discussed our concerns as a group. In the end the group decision was to agree to the Fringe performances. After all, we rationalized, we would be in the popular theatre section and the audience would not be expecting "slick entertainment." Further, creating awareness was one of the reasons why we performed. This audience was included in that objective. As Don pointed out, the audience members needed to know that "This is our reality and this is what happens in the inner city of Edmonton, your inner city" (personal communication, December 22, 1995). The Fringe performances went well. The festival atmosphere, respectful audiences, and a degree of audience recognition had a positive impact on the youth. They felt that what they had to say was important and that people were willing to listen.

As time went on, we performed at other venues such as conferences where the audience did not have direct experience with the reality that we were illustrating on the stage. However, the performances were respectfully and enthusiastically received by the audience. The group members gained valuable experience and were beginning to become quite skilled and confident in the discussion period following each performance. The following exchange provides an example of the post-performance dialogue at one such performance at the Global Visions Conference, University of Alberta, March 13, 1991:

Audience member:
What you guys portrayed was ... well it came from you guys. I've seen a lot of this stuff and do this kind of work and it's really encouraging when people can make their own images. But also I think what's more important is that you guys try to find ways out. My one question is how do you guys feel after doing this?

Carol, Group Member:
Tired. Every time I've done this I feel better. Like, some people have gone through this. I feel better and maybe there are some people in the audience that has been through it and just to let them know they're not the only ones That there's somebody else out there it might help them.

Audience member:
So what do you guys think it is that makes your life look like that... ?

Susan, Group Member:
Mainly the drugs and alcohol. [As Susan's understanding grows the answer to this question grows and is seen to have historical roots. This development will be explored later on in the narrative.]

Cecil, Group Member:
And probably the feeling of being trapped.

Audience member:
Why the drugs and alcohol?

Tom, Group Member:
People use it as an excuse to escape. Like, they're having problems, they pick up the bottle right away. They won't think about anything... . And then they think the pain is gone if they drink or do some drugs... but then it just builds up more and more and then it will all come out. Does that answer your question?

Audience member:
So what do you think the father's pain was?

Lorne, Group Member:
It was coke addiction.

This exchange, as I see it, is rooted in the "blame the victim" mentality that dominated the early part of our work. It was a stage that we had to go through. It was obvious though that the group was actively looking for a way out of their situation and involving the community in their search.

Exchanges such as the above led to a further realization that the youth also had something to say to "the fancy people" who constituted the Fringe and conference audiences. At the first few of these performances I positioned myself off to the side of the stage in case I was needed to respond to a difficult question. Some audiences tend to ask more wordy questions than the group members were accustomed to. At the same time I was conscious of the need for the youth to respond to the questions themselves during discussion period. After all, it was their lives they had exposed and opened up for discussion. What courage they displayed! It was certainly not my place to assume center stage during discussion period. On the other hand, I didn't want to place any of the youth in danger.

The next request that we received was to perform at the "First National Healing Our Youth Conference" at the Edmonton Inn (Sept. 19, 1990). This performance was for between 400 and 500 First Nations educators, youth workers, community leaders, and community activists. We approached the performance--our first conference--with considerable excitement. The group considered themselves to be the voice of youth at the conference. As facilitators, we considered it our responsibility to ensure that the performance, as well as having integrity with respect to content, was also good theatre. Our responsibility was to ensure that this was accomplished without altering or embellishing the content. The audience reaction to *Spider* was nothing short of astounding: a long, standing ovation, then a rush to the stage! Windspeaker correspondent Diane Parenteau, in an article about the conference wrote,

> Of all the presentations heard during the four day Poundmaker's conference none touched the soul of the issues facing adolescents like the drama performance by a group of inner city youth. The Inner City Drama Club's 30-minute play touched on the realities of prostitution, drugs, education, peer pressure and suicide in a funny, sad, scary manner that tugged on the emotions of everyone who watched. Even stronger than the message was the group itself that represented the strengths, hopes, and dreams of all young people today (Oct., 12, 1990: 10).

"Healing Our Youth" was a national conference. The group gained considerable strength from this performance. Their strength and hope was displayed in their efforts to overcome the difficulty of their situations. The youths' dreams were revealed in a series of dream scenes that punctuated *Spider*. In the play each character had a daydream in which they acted out their dream career. However, the spiders in their lives, drugs, alcohol, and abuse--prevented them from reaching their dreams. The group showed that these spiders could be overcome and they became proud of their heritage.

To the audience the group represented problems that they were all too familiar with in their own communities. Among Métis and First Nations audiences comments such as, "Most of us have experienced what you showed in your plays but were afraid to talk about it" were quite common (Audience member, performance of *They Can't Be Trusted* September, 1994). Although the issues of *Spider* and our other plays are not strictly native issues they dominate life for youth in our group and for many First Nations youth that I have subsequently had the privilege of getting to know. In the next chapter I will provide a few more examples of our performances.

Summary

By this time the group members had experience with the staging of the show and working as a group. All decisions were based on consensus and covered every aspect of the presentation. Each group member had an area of responsibility: two people were responsible for lighting, two more for sound, others for props, and on and on until all aspects of the production were managed.

Performing the play objectified elements of their lives. What once was an overpowering personal problem had been objectified in a play and presented itself as a wider social problem. The play was performed for a variety of audiences, and following each performance, group members discussed possible responses to what once was an overpowering personal problem. Through this process, some group members were beginning to realize that the problems that they had once attributed to their personal inadequacy affected many other people as well. Some group members were beginning to realize that their social conditions had deep historical roots. In the process, the young people gained confidence and a deeper understanding of their social reality. The blame the victim mentality that dominated some of our early sessions would in some cases be transformed into understanding. The depth of this understanding varied from person to person.

As time went on, group members became more proficient and assumed more responsibility for performances and programming. Requests for performances continued to come in. The "Healing Our Youth Conference" marked the beginning of these inner city youth helping themselves, identifying their own developmental needs, and directing their own development. The next chapter, "Helping Youth Help Themselves" will be concerned with this developmental period and the barriers that the youth struggled to overcome.

CHAPTER VII
HELPING YOUTH HELP THEMSELVES

Introduction

In this chapter, the growth and development of the Downtown Group is followed through: the creation of two more popular theatre performances, *Silent Cries* and *They Can't Be Trusted*. These plays were performed in venues such as the Nechi/Poundmaker Institute, Edmonton Young Offenders Center, Ben Calf Robe School, and at conferences for Native and non Native organizations. The chapter Inner City details the establishment of a residence for youth in need and Lorne, one of the members of the Downtown Group who came to stay in the house tells his story. The content of *Spider, They Can't Be Trusted,* and *Silent Cries* will be analyzed and the growing social awareness of the youth discussed. Finally, after the youth identified education as being necessary for their continued development,the establishment of Inner City High School is discussed.

The Downtown Group continued to perform *Spider* for several months. Before taking part in the popular theatre process, many of the youth were unable to trust each other or, for that matter, anyone else. During the performances of *Spider,* and the eventual creation of *Silent Cries*, members of the Downtown Group became a mutual support network for each other, able to share their pain and their joy. This was a very important step and paved the way for the development that was to come. Many of the youth felt a lack of love and support in their lives. During Wednesday evening meetings, the group began to fill some of that lack with the support they found in each other. Don expressed this developing group connection in the following way.

He said,

> On Wednesday night I wasn't lonely. I wasn't alone. I was with people that cared about me... . (personal communication, December 22, 1995)

In Susan's words,

> When I joined the group I didn't have the family support and love. I had it but hardly... . Over the years I began to think of the group as a second family (personal communication, December 2, 1994)

Lack of family support was a dominant theme for many of the youth. The growing solidarity among group members was quite moving.

Between 1990 and 1995 we performed for a variety of groups. I will list some of these performances to illustrate the growth that was taking place among group members.

Nechi/Poundmaker Institute (1990-1995)

Nechi is an alcohol and drug education centre. The Nechi section trains counsellors to become addictions workers in their own communities. The Poundmaker section of the institute is a drug and alcohol treatment centre. Over the years we have been invited to perform several times at Nechi/Poundmaker. When we perform at the Nechi, it is for an audience that has, in most cases, direct experience with the issues of the plays and are now in treatment from the cumulative effect of those issues. Because of this fact, post performance discussions were not dominated by questions about the life illustrated on stage but with acknowledgement and with recognition of the courage that the youth showed when they reached into the dark corners of their reality to create a play. During most performances I was set up in the midst of the audience operating lights and sound. After a few performances I realized that I could 'feel' the audience. I could 'feel' their degree of engagement and appreciation of the production. The Nechi/Poundmaker audience was always engaged, respectful, and appreciative. Performances were met with standing ovations, on occasion gifts were presented to the group members, and the talk-back sessions following the play were substantial and the questions were heart-felt. Comments that touched us all were part of these sessions as both audience and group members struggled with the desperation of their lives. For example, when we performed *Silent Cries* (about family violence and substance abuse) at Nechi on August 13, 1991, members of the audience made the following comments:

-It [the play] hits home.

-I was in WIN house [a shelter for battered women] three times, honest.

-Things will change when people can see what they are doing.

-It [the play] shows we can break the circle and we don't have to live like that.

These were emotional performances for me. I could feel the connection and understanding between audience and actors. I was once asked in a university seminar how I knew that the stories the youth were telling were true. Merely responding "I know" does not provide hard evidence, despite my familiarity with some of the issues. The response of the clients and counsellors at Nechi/Poundmaker--people who have lived the life--is a testimony to the honesty of the performances. At a Nechi/Poundmaker performance, one of the clients of the center, presented the group with a poem he wrote. The following excerpt will give some indication of the feelings that were stirred in these performances:

> You my brothers and sisters. Now is the time to break free
> from the binding chains of alcohol, drugs and the abuse of one
> another. That tie us down unable to spread our wings and fly as
> the eagle. Look deep into your hearts and say aloud with pride.
> I AM INDIAN, and know that we as a people will never die ... .
> I say this to you my people because I care.

The group members were always made to feel proud of their courage in coming to terms with the issues of their environment and proud of themselves for taking their story to other people who might have been or were in similar circumstances. In contrast, the audience at the Edmonton Young Offender Center was reserved and subdued. But again, performing for this audience was a test of fire, a testimony to the integrity of the performance.

Edmonton Young Offender Center (EYOC) 1990-1995

The audience members at EYOC were inmates, prisoners between the ages of 12 and 18. There is a high percentage of native youth in the centre at any given time. For example, First Nation or Metis people account for 2% of Alberta's total population (Canada West Foundation 1991: 13) and slightly more than 5% of the

Edmonton area population. Yet First Nation or Metis people account for over 34% of inmates in provincial institutions (Edmonton Social Planning Council, 1993: 28). This over- representation in Alberta jails, according to Geofrey York, (1990)can be attributed to poverty, homelessness, and the inability to pay court-imposed fines for minor offenses. According to York, a committee of the Canadian Bar Association drew the following conclusion about the high incarceration rates of Native people. The committee reported that "placed in a historical context, the prison has become for many young native people the contemporary equivalent of what the residential school represented for their parents" (York, 1990, pp. 146-147). This manifestation of structural violence is "perpetuated by the social institutions and structures upon which our personal and global relationships are founded" (Kitchen, 1996, p. 4). John Boyco writes about racism in Canada and places this structural violence in a historical context. Boyco writes, "Many native families and communities ... [are] fractured by abuse, alcoholism, and other legacies of residential schools and child abductions" (Boyko, 1995, p.205).

When we perform for the general population of the center--despite the fact that they have an intimate connection to the reality that is being played out on the stage--they are quite reserved in their response to the play and in the discussion period which follows. I attribute this response to the oppressive atmosphere in the centre and the effect of the ever-present guards. When we perform for small audiences at the centre, in a small room rather than the gymnasium where we perform for the general population, Jackie Fiala, the Native Programs Coordinator, selects a group who in her estimation, would be receptive to the performance. She then has a brief discussion with the group and introduces the coming performance. Fiala also follows up the performance and discussion with the inmates by continuing the dialogue on an individual basis after we leave.

When I asked her about this process, Fiala said "I always watch the youth. It [the play] was a significant experience for them. They said it made them think about what they do. Usually, they said, you don't think about what you do you just do it.It[the play] mirrors what goes on in my life (Jackie Fiala, personal communication, Nov. 26, 1996)

These performances and the audience interaction that they engender could be a catalyst for prisoners to engage in an analysis of their social reality. However, in the absence of financial support for such a program, we are limited by our scarce resources. Over the years the Downtown Group has continued to perform at EYOC and to enter into discussion with inmates about issues such as substance abuse, racism, and family violence. Audience response can be wide and varied, but their is always a sincere acknowledgement of the reality that is portrayed in the world of the play. The audience at the "Dialogue for Development" conference was typical of many conference audiences but quite different from the young audience at EYOC.

Dialogue For Development (January, 1991)

The audience at the "Dialogue For Development" conference was, with the odd exception, made up of middle-class community activists and a small group of socially concerned high school students. "Dialogue For Development" was sponsored by Change For Children, a local NGO (non-governmental organization) that, for the most part, focuses on development education in the North and initiating grass roots development projects in the South. Change For Children provided Inner City Drama with administrative support during the first few years of our operation. We have worked cooperatively whenever possible since that time. For our group, the significance of the "Dialogue For Development" conference was its focus on native issues in Canada. Once again, at this conference, the group members were seen as representatives of Canada's First Nations youth. The presence of Elija Harper at the conference and the gift that he bestowed on the group members following the performance heightened our sense of giving youth a voice. The youth welcomed the opportunity to share their experiences with others. They hoped that through their efforts others might become aware of the desperation in the lives they were illustrating.

In this sense, we were successful. There was a warm response to the presentation. Questions and comments focused on the courage of the youth in making the presentation and discussing and attempting to understand the issues. Earlier on in the conference, Elija Harper discussed the needs of First Nations People, their traditional philosophy, and their relation to the environment. In their play the drama group presented a clear picture of day-to-day life for many First Nations urban youth. For the majority of audience members, the glimpse into the reality was out of their range of experience. Creating this awareness was an objective for the group.

Partners in Education Conference, Yellowhead Tribal Council (1991-1994)

This conference marked the first in a series of annual Yellowhead Tribal Council (YTC) Conferences that we were invited to perform at. The conference, held at Edmonton's Coast Terrace Inn, was attended by elders, community leaders, teachers, and youth workers. Inner City group members were treated as celebrities and were singled out by elders and other community leaders as courageous youth working to better their lives and the lives of others. The atmosphere at these gatherings was always positive. For the most part we were unable to take part in the workshops that made up the conference, Preparing the presentation, setting up the equipment (lights, sound, and props) took most of our time. Nonetheless, the atmosphere was contagious. It was an atmosphere of people working together to improve their lives, of role models encouraging others to finish school, of reformed addicts and alcoholics encouraging others to change, of Elders saying "Look what's happening to our people." This exemplary and psychological support was reinforced by conference organizers. The group members were provided with what they interpreted as posh sleeping accommodations and fancy meals with unpronounceable menu items. The courage of the youth in discussing their personal issues with others was recognized and acknowledged by audience members. They began to think and feel proud of themselves as First Nations people. This sense of themselves grew as we continued to perform.

Our Elders Speak (1991)

This performance was held at Ben Calf Robe School. Ben Calf Robe School provides adult education for First Nations people as well as providing First Nations youth with a culturally sensitive junior high school program. The school follows the Alberta Education junior high school curriculum but includes elements of First Nation culture. The conference was attended by a group of elders from across Canada, some community workers, and students from the school. This performance was put on by a group of First Nations people who were independent of the school. Ben Calf Robe School , however, provided the venue for the performance. This performance, like the others, enhanced the youths' role as storytellers and as young people working to overcome the problems of their environment. One of the elders in attendance had this to say after seeing an early version of *Silent Cries:*

> This [play] reminds me of my life if we had not changed our lifestyle and left the bottle... . We are losing our young due to alcohol. I'm glad you do these performances (Napoleon, 1991).

Silent Cries is a story of substance and family violence. It is a story that mirrors reality for many native people. The reality is a response to or consequence of the historic marginalization of First Nation and Metis people.

We began developing *Silent Cries* while performing *Spider*. *Spider* deals with the harsh reality of inner city streets. It is more upbeat and humours than *Silent Cries*. We received so many requests to perform *Spider* that we went back to it after a few performances of *Silent Cries*. We did, however, continue to develop *Silent Cries*.

Peer Support Conference (1992)

Not all audiences were as responsive or as understanding as the groups I have listed above. There were audiences such as schools that responded in superficial ways such as limiting their questions to asking group members their names and ages during the talk- back. In school performances we found that if the teachers had the opportunity to prepare the students for the performance, then discussion period was more substantial. Whenever we performed at a school I would ask that teachers discuss the presentation with students before taking part in the performance. I requested that the teachers inform their students that the play was based on the life experiences of the young performers. Because of this, the students should be respectful and attentive; they should attempt to appreciate the fact that it is difficult to act out parts of one's life in front of an audience. This was our major objective in preparing students for the performances. An ideal situation would be if representatives from Inner City could offer a workshop to teachers who would then prepare their students for the presentation and the discussion period following the performance. However, even the most basic of preparations did not often take place. I think that it was an error on my part not to insist on a preparation process before performing at schools. Nonetheless, we began to shy away from school performances. The audiences were often unruly. They were quite noisy, laughing and guffawing in sensitive parts of the performances.

We did, however, perform several times at Ben Calf Robe School and although the students were not prepared in advance, the performance was treated with more respect. Whenever we performed for audiences other than our own community, we inadvertently placed the youth in a dangerous position. Their newly acquired confidence and the state of their recovery was, and still is, fragile. Comments from audiences not familiar with the reality we portray on stage ranged from respectful to somewhat less than respectful. In these situations some audience responses can be harmful. Responses that displayed a lack of understanding did, however, give us the opportunity to discuss the nature of the response with the group and the possible reasons for it.

For example, we were asked to perform *Spider* for an Edmonton Peer Support Conference in February of 1992. Peer Support Groups work in schools and try to involve youth in programs employing a variety of strategies to help youth resolve their own problems and conflicts in non-violent ways. The audience (650 people) was composed of mainly students but also included counsellors, teachers, and parents involved with Peer Support Programs in schools throughout Alberta.

I should mention that by this time we had added a financial dimension to our work. We charged organizations a performance fee whenever we performed. This allowed us to pay the youth a wage of $6.00 an hour for rehearsals and performances and to cover the production costs. From the $6.00 per hour wage, the youth decided to set aside 10% of their wages in a group fund. The money was for emergencies such as food, bus fare, or other immediate needs. It was controlled by group members and all requests for emergency funding were brought to the group as a whole.

Despite the financial incentive, we were undecided whether to do this performance or not. We were aware that the audience would not be from our community, but as peer support counsellors we hoped they would be understanding. After some discussion we reasoned that creating awareness about some issues that the peer support counsellors might encounter was reason enough to perform. In retrospect this was faulty reasoning. I suspect that most counsellors did not often encounter the issues we were presenting. Most of the youth in the audience seemed to stay focused on the performance but I suspect for reasons other than social concern. For example, many youth were attracted to the music in *Spider*, others, it seems, were attracted to Lorne. Lorne, who I have yet to introduce, had only recently joined the group. Every time he made an entrance on stage, whatever he was saying was drowned in a chorus of whistles from the young women in the audience. He achieved celebrity status for his sex appeal, not his courage, in working to overcome serious social issues.

At the end of the performance I noticed a disturbance between an audience member and some of the organizers of the conference. I made my way to the source of the disturbance. The audience member, a visiting parent, was quite upset by the content of the performance. She told me,

> The play showed students situations that they [the youth] should not see. The portrayal of the teacher was unfair and the treatment of the women sexist. I found the language sexist (program notes, 1992).

I attempted to explain to the parent that there was no intent to show anyone in a bad light. In fact I said, "I am a teacher myself." Our intent was to explore the reality of the group members in the hope that the play would help others understand that this reality exists and they could someday become involved in similar situations as peer support counsellors.

One of the characters in *Spider* is a teacher. The teacher was created by the youth. Some of the action takes place in a classroom. For most of the play the teacher is unaware of the drama that is unfolding among the students. In fact, he has left the classroom to make some photo copies when Pam tells Jet that she has to work as a prostitute to pay for the drugs she smoked. This is a common strategy of some pimps. The youth in the drama group were aware of this strategy; however, I suspect that the parent was not. In another scene, Pam is picked up by a man and raped. The treatment of women in the play is sexist to say the least and the portrayal of the teacher could be considered unfair. It is, however, an accurate portrayal of reality as the youth understood it.

The teacher, in one memorable scene as he returned assignments to students, said, "You fail, You're a failure," and "What are you doing here?" to most of the students. That bit of dialogue was a spontaneous creation of one of the group members. In my understanding it summed up his interpretation of the self-fulfilling prophecy. The drama symbolized the youths' experience with structural violence in the school system. The subtext of the school scene represented their experience of low class or race-based teacher expectations. Many youth in inner city environments experience low teacher expectations and perform accordingly (Curtis,et al.,1992).

There was not a lot of substantial dialogue following this performance. Most of the questions came from the youth, and the majority of those questions were of the "How old are you and what school do you go to?" variety. The performance was booked at the end of a long day for the conference participants. Our performance marked the end of the conference, and many people were from out of town and anxious to return home. The discussion period was brief and superficial. We began to take down our equipment as soon as we could, anxious to get out of there. There can be quite a bit of work involved in taking down after a large conference performance. It is easy to get consumed in the process. At one point, though, I noticed that two of the group members were missing. I began to search the main floor of the hotel that the conference was held in. As I walked by the bar, I saw Melissa and one of the newer members sitting having a beer (under age and at an AADAC conference). Whether any of the conference organizers or participants noticed them I cannot say.

Following the conference, other audience members called AADAC (the sponsoring agency) to complain. For us, we were interpreting reality as it is played out for the youth in our program. For some audience members we were being unfair, sexist, and vulgar. The power and value of the story we were telling was lost. This was also the last time that we received financial support from AADAC. I cannot say for certain whether this was due to the nature of the performance, the visit to the bar, or for some other reason.

Nonetheless the youth had begun to acquire a reputation as a drama group that dealt with critical social issues with integrity and in a straightforward no nonsense way. They could be counted on to show up for a performance and *most* rehearsals. They understood that *Spider* received the criticism it did because many of the audience members did not have insight into the way of life that was illustrated on the stage. The importance of their newly acquired role and status was not lost on the youth and they approached the reworking of *Silent Cries* with enthusiasm.

The Drama House

All this activity with performances, rehearsals, and weekly meetings helped us all to get to learn more about each other. We discovered that some members of the group did not have a permanent place to live. They would stay here for one night and there for another. Sometimes they would place themselves in less than ideal circumstances in order to have a place to sleep for the night.

We did our best to rent shelter for group members, but despite the necessity it was financially very difficult. To address this problem in July of 1991, we rented a large house in Edmonton's inner city. The house had space for an office, an apartment, several rooms, and the odd nook and cranny. Up until this time I was working out of my house, car, university office, Change For Children's office, and any other space that could be commandeered. Renting the house was an important step that gave the youth and Inner City as a whole a stable base from which to move forward. At the time, though, the action to rent the house was the result of the youth identifying a need, housing. We did our best to respond to that need. Inner City programming has always been based on the fundamental principle that if in our programs we create an environment where the youth identify a developmental need, then we have the responsibility to do our best to respond to that need. The Inner City house was such a response. Several members of the drama group moved into the house, and when Lorne needed a place to live there was a place for him. Lorne was not in theDowntown Group when he moved into the house but had come into contact with Inner City at Eastside School. Lorne also had friends in the Downtown Group. At this point it is worthwhile presenting at some length Lorne's reflections on his life at some length so as to provide the reader with some understanding of the issues he was attempting to overcome.

Lorne

I began the interview by reminding Lorne that he was free to choose not to answer any questions that made him feel uncomfortable. I asked Lorne where he was from. He replied:

Lorne:
I was born here in Edmonton, but all my relatives are from Cold Lake [Alberta], or fro my Dad's side of the family anyways, and I don't know, those are the ones that I don't really like to associate with: junkies and winos.

Joe:
And when you lived in Edmonton... did you live in Edmonton with your father and mother together?

Lorne
When I was born, my father and mother were not together....
And when I was born, I think I spent 3 maybe 4 years with my Mom and then she put us in the Atonement Home [a receiving home for children in crisis], me and my brother, from when I was four, and from there everything just went haywire. That's when I was like...I remember when I was six, I moved in with my Dad. Then I moved back a couple of months later, back to the Atonement Home. Then I moved back with my Dad, then back to the Atonement

Home, then back with my Dad, then back to the Atonement Home, then my Mom kidnapped us from the Atonement [summer] camp. She told us we were going to go visit our Grandpa who lives down at Alberta Beach in his trailer. Me and my brother always loved his trailer. And she just took us. That was pretty odd. Then we went back to the Atonement Home after that and then we were bounced around through quite a few different foster homes, and group homes. Different and weird, weird places.

Joe:
I guess every place has its different rules and you have to get used to each place.

Lorne:
For a while....basically, I guess that's probably why I wasn't really a stable person. I wasn't really used to having stability, cause, like me and my brother wouldn't stay in one place for more than four maybe five months. The longest we'd stay was maybe six months in a home and then we'd just get moved again. Every place was different. Some places they had religion, where like, you know, like that one place I told you about before where they were going to adopt me. The only time me and my brother ever got separated, they thought that saying "shut up" was a swear word. And like it was hard for me to live there because living how I lived, you know, especially at the Atonement Home, all these other kids coming along, all these other kids with messed up parents and that, you know, three and four year old kids that know how to say "shit" and "fuck" and stuff like that. And that's how I grew up, with that language and to hear that "shut up" is a swear word, it was hard for me to live there.

Joe:
The Atonement Home, is that a receiving home for children?

Lorne:
It's basically....it's kind of like a placement where you can put your kids there for short erm or long term, and from there you find other home placements. It's just that me and my brother never....I don't really know what happened with me and my brother. We just basically stayed at the Atonement Home most of the time we were in foster care....it was the Atonement Home most of the time. What it was supposed to be is, my Mom was only supposed to drop us off for six months. She said "I want to put my boys here for six months while I go into a drug rehab centre", then this lawyer friend of hers who was supposed to be helping her out named Hank Stess, when my Mom got out of the treatment centre, she had her life all straightened out and everything. When she came to get me and my brother, they told her "No you can't do it. There's a restraining order against you, you're an unfit mother. She went to go and see Hank, and Hank was the one that got that restraining order and blah, blah, blah, and that's when me and Clinton

became permanent wards of the government.

Joe:
I never knew you were a permanent ward of the government.

Lorne:
You didn't?

Joe:
No, I didn't.

Lorne:
My Mom was the...the whole 7 years that me and Clinton were in care she fought the Court system for all those years. She was the only woman in Canadian history to ever get her kids back from the government when they were permanent wards. Cause me and Clinton were supposed to be there until we were 18.

Joe:
Yeah, once you're in, you can't....

Lorne:
Yeah, and she fought and she fought and she fought and she got us back. And so instead of spending from the time I was like 4 or 5 or whatever, I would have been in there until I was 18. Instead of spending 14 years in there, I only spent 7.

Joe:
And it was those 7 years when you were all over the place?

Lorne:
Man oh man. You can imagine if I would have stayed in there for like 14 years? ...

Joe:
You are really missing love when you're like that. Like, people can be nice to you but they can't love you like a parent can.

Lorne:
Everywhere you went...everyone thinks kids are stupid, right? But for one thing, kids aren't stupid: kids are probably smarter than some grownups. And like, everywhere you went you could just see them bullshit. Like the fake love, you know. But yet, they treat you like dirt, and they say it's best for you. I don't know....and like how can anyone love you like a parent when there's a hundred or so different places you get bounced to? And you don't spend more than like a couple of months in each one. It was very rare that Clinton and I ever unpacked anything. We'd move in with our suitcases. Keep our suitcases under our beds.

Keep them under our beds and when we needed clean clothes we pull them out from the suitcase, take the stuff out of the suitcase, and when laundry was done, we'd fold up the laundry and put it in the suitcase. We'd rarely ever unpack because we knew we'd have to move in a couple of months anyways. So it was pretty harsh... .

Joe:
It must have been for a kid, like, you just don't know what the hell is going on.What is this?

Lorne:
Yeah like, I don't know. Like, I've heard lots of people say that they feel sorry for me and my brother cause we never got a chance to have a childhood.

Joe:
Right.

Lorne:
Well, I understand, yeah, I've never had a childhood. It's no big deal. But I don't like it when people say they feel sorry for me, cause who wants to have pity? That's just pointless. Unless they give you money.

Joe:
That's a different story.

Lorne:
I feel sorry for you not eating enough here. Here's fifty bucks here. Thanks.

Joe:
You had some problems with like, some incidents of sexual abuse through that time in foster homes, in the different foster homes?

Lorne:
Yeah. In different foster homes, and with my Dad too. Stuff like that. The most memories I have of it is with my Dad. I remember it happened in the foster homes cause I remember that was a couple of the reasons why me and Clinton left the foster homes cause we always had one of them child care workers come and check on us once a week. They'd take us out for pizza. You know, "So how do you like your place?"...blah, blah, blah. And then we'd say so this is what's happening here. We don't like it there. This guy does this. You know, and I don't remember too clearly about some of the major details about some of the foster homes and that but, with my Dad, I remember. My brother he still denies it, you

know. "It never happened. It wasn't even like that. What are you talking about?" But like, I'm no idiot, and I remember how it went. And I hate to talk about him like this, seeing as he's not here to defend himself. If he was, he'd bullshit anyways.

Joe:
Well we don't have to go into it or anything. That's cool. That's O.K. I remember you've told me stories about... travelling across the country

Lorne:
With my Mom and that?

Joe:
Yeah.

Lorne:
After my Mom got us back it was just insane. Me and my brother gave her the nickname of travelling gypsy cause once again it was just like living in all the foster homes. You know, she never stayed in one place for more than 6 months. And if it was 6 months, it would be a record. And then we'd end up moving. She'd get charged. And then she'd say, "We gotta move...we gotta move". And then we'd do a midnight move. We'd pack up all of our stuff. And we'd leave like half of our stuff there. Dishes, furniture. She'd try and sell what she could before we left , but we'd leave most of the stuff behind... . She kept moving us around. When I was in Westmount. I went to Westmount. I was a geek man. Straight A student, you know, cause I wanted to make my Mom proud. Cause like that was the first junior high I was in. So I'm getting straight A's and that. What month was it? May, I think it was. So like, June's coming up. And at the end of June, that was the end of it. Right? What does she do? She goes and moves me.

Joe:
In May?

Lorne:
In May.

Joe:
You didn't pass?

Lorne:
I failed Grade 7 cause that's when we moved to Winnipeg. You couldn't get the transcripts transferred cause then they'd know where she was. She had all these Canada-wide warrants. "I want my boy's transcripts...Lorne's transcripts." And I remember it cause it had a cool name. It was Sir Winston Wolf or something like

that and I went there and as soon as I walked in they just said, you know, "You got two choices. You can stick around here and try and learn some more stuff. You know you're not going to pass." Cause my Mom made up some bullshit story about how my transcripts went up in flames at my other school and blah, blah, blah. They gave me two choices. They said, "You can stick around here and try and learn some stuff if you want something to do, or you can come back in September, cause there's no way you're going to pass." So because of her I was getting great grades, straight A's and that, and I got totally screwed. Like I'd be graduated and probably in college right now, if I would have stuck with that. Maybe. Cause I dropped out of school so many times after that.

Joe:
But every time you moved you'd get pulled out of school and it really messes you up.

Lorne:
Exactly. Like Vancouver. I went to this one school. It was weird, cause like, in Westmount, when I was in Grade 7, Winnipeg, I was in Grade 7, Vancouver, when I went there, I was in Grade 7. Then I went back to Eastside, I was in grade seven there, and that was the place that I passed, was in Eastside. So like how many schools is that all in the same Grade?

Joe:
My goodness.

Lorne:
Drove me crazy.

Joe:
When I first met you at Eastside School... you had a beeper on you at that time, if I remember correctly. That was the time that you were selling drs downtown, like you were fronting for your mother, selling drugs for your mother?

Lorne:
Yeah. That was a bad time. She said she had some sickness or some kind of....but like Clinton told me later that she o.d'd [overdosed] and she didn't want to go to the hospital for it. Like her legs they swelled out like that. She couldn't wear pants. Like the pants that she was wearing, we had to cut off of her. They swelled out like that. And where her track marks were, [needle marks from injecting drugs] they started like oozing this gross green pussy stuff.

Joe:
Oh my God!

Lorne:
So like she o.d'd and I found that out from Clinton. She told me she was sick and she just passed out on the couch and she told us to do the business for her and that and when she came to, she just thought," well shit man, I might as well just keep letting them do it." So she hooked us up with pagers. You know, so that we could get our calls and what not. And we were selling ritalin and stuff downtown.... Late nights, you know. Standing out in front there [a downtown bar]. Cops would drive by. "What are you doing out here?" Waiting for my Mom. She's in the bar getting her boyfriend. "Oh o.k., no problem." I've seen a lot of nasty crap down there.

Joe:
I'll bet you. That's a pretty heavy scene down there.

Lorne:
I've seen people that...we'd go do deals with these people and stuff like that. I remember this one guy, Arthur... He would hook us up with most of the deals. You know he would tell us who wants, what quantity, how much, you know, blah, blah, blah. And he would always get more for us... . Eleven bucks a pill, twelve bucks a pill. We'd go back and tell my Mom, "Sorry mom, they're only going for seven bucks a pill" and we'd like keep money for ourselves. Keep profit and stuff. Like I was going to school with like, I had rings that I'd buy from pawnshops. You know I'd just give them away. [I'd say], You want this? Here, fuck, take it. I don't want it." Cause I knew it was blood money. I had like, new leathers all the time. I had a blue leather jacket and a black leather jacket, and I had one of them bomber jackets. I'd just go to parties, get really drunk and I'd lose them. I was going to get a gun too. Arthur was going to get me and Clinton guns for really good prices. That's when my Mom kind of sobered up and straightened up and said, "You know, give me the pagers back. I'm taking them back. You guys are getting too used to this kind of stuff."

Joe:
So that ended your career?

Lorne:
Yeah, basically. It was kind of cool, but now that I look back on it, I'm glad that she put a stop to it... .

Joe:
Well, how was your time at Eastside School while that was going on? Did you do any math and reading?

Lorne:

No. I didn't get much done. I was a shit disturber in Eastside too... . Down in the Principal's office every day. Stealing things from class. Setting the clock ahead like a half an hour to get out of class... .

Joe:
So you did all this running around and hanging out downtown at night?

Lorne:
Yeah.

Joe:
And went to Grade 8....

Lorne:
Grade 7, Grade 8.

Joe:...
During the day. Do you think that the teachers had any kind of clue what was going on?

Lorne:
They were stupid. They didn't know nothing man. All's they thought....they blamed it on hanging out with the wrong crowd. "Oh you're hanging with the wrong crowd." No I'm not. Basically at that time my friends were the only ones who were supporting me. Telling me, "'You shouldn't be doing that kind of stuff. We do drugs yeah. But that's heavy stuff. You know you shouldn't be doing that kind of stuff.' The teachers there didn't know jackshit. They blamed it on my problems at home. [They would say] 'Are you having problems at home? Are you eating enough? Does you mother yell at you? Are you retarded?' [I wanted them to] Get out of my face.

Joe:
People that have been on the street for a while, when they see a young person there, they try and tell you like, it's been my experience anyway, like, it's not good to be where you are. Get yourself out of here.

Lorne:
Some people. Some people did that. Like Arthur, he was trying to get me and my brother out. But because we were Darlene's boys he would help us with the deals and that. Lots of people would say, "Next generation...." Lots of people were saying that Clinton and me were going to be the next generation .... Cause like my Mom was always down there... .

Joe:
Oh, here comes her boys.

Lorne:
"Here comes her boys. Taking over the mother's business, are you?" Oh man. People were saying "Looking forward to seeing you in the future blah, blah, blah." Right? It's pretty harsh. I still see some of the idiots out there.

[After some more discussion about the people Lorne knew on the street we talked about when he first came to the Inner City House (known on the street as the drama house). I asked Lorne what date he came to stay at the house.]

Lorne:
It was '92 too. That's a long time ago, February of '92, I remember because the exact date I took off. February second. I took off from home on February first. And I went out to a party and got really drunk. Flirted with the chicks and blah blah blah. The next day I'm like, [I said to] Frank, hat am I going to do, man? I took off from home. My Mom tried to shank me with a knife and she's got all these charges and she wants to move again. What am I going to do, I got nowhere to go? [Frank said] "Do you remember Joe?" Yeah. "Well, he's got a house. Just join the drama group and you can be in the house." And that's when I came here with you.

Joe:
Were you 15 then?

Lorne:
Yeah.....just turned 15.

Joe:
Where were you living? Were you staying in a car for all that time?

Lorne:
No. That was earlier. I took off a couple of other times from home too. And I ended up staying in an abandoned car that was there.

Joe:
When you said your Mom tried to shank you, like the last time you were out,does that mean that she held a knife to you?

Lorne:
Yeah.... She was off the drugs for a little while and I told her, you know, I said,

"I'm going to make a deal with you. I'll stick around but, if you do one of three things. If you do drugs again, I'm out of here. If you go to jail again I'm out of here. If you hold a knife to me like you did to Clinton, I'm out of here." She did all three in one night. She calls me up from the Remand Centre. She's being held down there. She's so baked out of her mind that she doesn't really know who she is or who I am. She gets home somehow... . She came home. I started freaking on her, told her, "Look, you told me you wouldn't do drugs again, you wouldn't go to jail again." Then she started giving me the lecture."Who do you think you are. It's only because of you kids that I do drugs. You guys put this on me and that on me." So I said, Ah fuck this, I'm out of here. So I started packing. You...fuck you." Bang. I grabbed that knife from her and I tossed it at the wall, broke it in half. The knife broke in half cause I threw it so hard. I was just choked. I was like, Fine. "Look, I told you one of three things and you do all three things in one night. I'm out of here. Have a nice life." I couldn't take it man. There's just so much a person can take.

Joe:
When you came to the drama house....I guess when you first came there it was a place to stay and you didn't care....like it was warm.

Lorne:
Yeah. It's warm here and there's food here and a bed to sleep in. I never expected to stay there for so long.

Joe:
That was almost 4 years, because you just moved a couple of months ago.

Lorne:
To months ago to be exact.

Joe:
I think I lived in the house about 3 of those years, probably. I was there three nights a week, sometimes more.

Lorne:
Sometimes more. You had a lot of work to do.

Joe:
And every day, pretty well. Became an expert at Star Trek.

Lorne:
It was good that I stayed there for so long, cause now I'm used to the stability thing. I wasn't used to it. It was kind of weird at first after the 6 month mark passed and I was like, wondering, feeling that feeling.... [I would say to myself]

I've got to move. Where? I'll stay here until I get some money, then get on my own. Then as I stayed, I didn't want to go

Joe:
So, you joined the Downtown Group after you came to the house. You were in the house for a while, and then you joined the drama group.

Lorne:
You guys were doing Spider when I first came here.

Joe:
That's right. (personal communication, December 21, 1995)

Lorne's account of the early years of his life bears a striking similarity to the stories that we have already heard. I have detailed some of these similarities in the following table.

Table 2

Incidents of Abuse in Childhood

Name	Sexual	Physical	Psychological	Substance	Age**
Susan	yes	yes	yes	yes	7-9
Melissa	yes	yes	yes	implied	12
Tom*	unknown	unknown	unknown	yes	unknown
Lorne	yes	yes	yes	yes	7
Don	yes	yes	yes	yes	6

Source: personal communication

*Tom, it will be recalled, rather than reveal himself in the programs, chose the role of clown as often as possible.

**The ages listed are the earliest that I know of. Some of the incidents listed could have occurred at an earlier age.

The incidents of abuse in Table 2 most often occurred at home or at the institution that was a substitute for home. I have illustrated the incidents of abuse and where they occured in Table 3. While I have not included life on the street as a site of abuse, it is a site of abuse and exploitation for many youth.

Table 3

Incidents of Abuse in Childhood and Where They Occurred

Name	Perpetrator	Site 1	Perpetrator	Site 2
Susan	Foster Parent	Foster Home	Brother	Family Home
Melissa	Step Father	Home		
Tom	unknown			
Lorne	Father	Home	Foster Parents	Foster Homes
Don	School Supervisor	School	Uncle	Home

Source: personal communication

Every child has a need to be loved, to feel safe, and to feel secure in their home and with their family. In Table 4, "Elements of Family Life," I have, based on the personal interviews reproduced above, listed the dominant themes that describe family life as it was recalled by the youth in this study. The presence or, in some cases absence of these themes send many youth to the 'street' in search of what they lack or to escape from abuse. In the elements marked "unknown" I do not have clear data to support an unequivocal yes or no. Through my interactions with the youth over the years the lack of, but need for, stability was a major theme. The lack of stability and a longing for love mark childhoods scarred by abuse, neglect, and violence. These themes appear in the following table:

Table 4

Elements of Family Life					
Name	**Security*****	**Love**	**Neglect**	**Abuse**	**Violence**
Susan	No	Unhealthy*	Yes	Yes	Yes
Melissa	No	Unknown	Unknown	Yes	Yes
Tom	See Note**	Unknown	See Note**	Yes	Unknown
Lorne	No	Unhealthy	Yes	Yes	Yes
Don	No	Unhealthy	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: personal communication

*The term unhealthy describes the understanding I have of the relationships some of the youth had or have with their parents or primary care givers and in most cases with siblings. While there may well have been love present, it was not nurturing or supportive. For example, Susan's mother's gifts of hash and solvent must have in some way been intended as a token of affection. However, it could be interpreted as manipulative. In any case, it was not a healthy expression of love .

**Tom seemed to feel secure in his home until he was about 16 years old. At that time his mother (Auntie) moved out of the city leaving Tom on his own. Tom seemed to turn mean during this period. He began to drink in excess and soon was in conflict with the police.

***Security in this sense means a stable home life where a child feels safety and trust in her or his care givers.

Street Culture

Tables 2-4 mark a route that leads directly to the street. Street culture is defined by several dominant themes such as substance abuse, prostitution, criminal activity, and violence. These themes lead the unsuspecting youth down a one-way street that provides temporary escape from a life of abuse and violence but leads to sorrow and desperation. The abuse of drugs and alcohol to the point of addiction is a norm in street culture. These addictions are punctuated with violence and quite often dominate the activities of one's life. Small time drug deals and petty crime generate the revenue to pay the high costs of addiction. Addictions take a personal and social toll. The social toll is incalculable and cannot be factored into election platforms as directly as deficit reduction and cuts to social programs. Addictions sap one's morals and focus initiative on personally and socially destructive behaviours; addictions and the attendant activities of the addicted are scarred by random and relentless acts of violence. For example, The John Howard Society, in a recent literature review intended to identify social and economic factors that can increase the risk of criminal behaviour and the dynamics among those factors, found that substance abuse was a strong predictor for "male delinquency" and "particularly for violent crimes." (1995, p. 60).

The violence comes in many forms. There is the ever-present structural violence lurking just below the surface. Physical violence is a constant: pimps employ physical violence to keep their girls in line. Violence often flares up on the street over territory or other conflicts such as drug rip offs (thefts from other dealers and customers) which can bring retribution that often results in injury and sometimes death. Psychological violence directed by the skills of manipulation are developed and honed at an early age. Street people and addicts young and old learn to use sex, guilt, pity,and empathy, on professionals such as lawyers, court officials, police officers, social workers, teachers, friends, and family to get what they need. When lovers turn these skills on each other the devastation borders on insanity. The lack of but longing for love can be easily manipulated. The promise to take care of you can be very appealing to someone who has never been taken care of. Prostitutes are recruited by pimps (pseudo lovers) or pimp/boyfriends or pimp/girlfriends. The young women or men (the great majority are women), wanting to please their pimps, sell their bodies to feed addictions. Other young women and men work the streets in a blind misguided search for love, to feed a hungry baby, to make it one more night, or to bring money home to the family. Through all of this, as Lorne's mother told him, you learn DTA (don't trust anyone).

Into this milieu come social workers, youth workers, teachers, counsellors, employment programs, and the concrete dictates of the law. This barrage of helping professionals, reinforced by unsuccessful attempts to change, quite often sends marginalized youth into a prolonged period of self-blame. The result is a tendency to give up and hide the mounting desperation under liberal doses of drugs and alcohol. The analysis of this process is based on personal experience and my own observations. Insight into the reality that I have just described have been documented in a recent study by The Edmonton Social Planning Council (1996).

In reflection, I felt foolish for thinking that these generational and fundamental problems, many of which have their roots in the structural violence of unequal life chances, might be addressed with the mere enhancement of self-esteem. Popular theatre, I was becoming convinced, might provide a foothold on that slippery slope which I have described.

The youth in the Downtown Group, courageous beyond words, used popular theatre in an attempt to understand and overcome the desperation of their social reality. Between 1991 and 1995 two more plays, *Silent Cries* and *They Can't Be Trusted*, as well as several smaller presentations dealing with a variety of social issues, were created. This period also saw the introduction of Cree culture into the plays. In this next section, I will discuss the creation and presentation of these plays.

Silent Cries

Silent Cries is about substance abuse and family violence. The play was first developed in 1991, performed a few times, and then revised in 1992, to fit the experiences of the members of the group in 1992. The subject of the play is universal as far as the youth who have been members of the Downtown Group are concerned. The details though, vary from person to person. The group of 1992 some of whom were present in 1991, approached the play with enthusiasm. The subject matter was close to everyone. Funding for the project was secured from Alberta Social Services. *Silent Cries* was a project that Alberta Social Services thought would educate the public about family violence and its relation to drug addiction in an innovative way.

The play, like all Inner City productions, was created by the youth in the group. It reflects their reality. *Silent Cries* tells the story of a father who is addicted to cocaine (coke) and beats his wife, his step-son, and his daughter. The youth introduced traditional culture into the play in the form of dance and a mourning song. This new dimension in the plays reflected the youth's growing pride in themselves and their desire to understand Cree culture. The play begins with a blues-based song written by one of the group members. The first two verses follow,

> On the streets I can feel the pain
> I need to get high or I'll go insane
> This is my life I don't need to retire
> Every night my life is on fire
>
> How can I sleep in this pool of pain
> How can I sleep when I don't know my name
> Can't you see me screaming at the sky
> Can't you hear my silent cries
> (Transcribed videotape, March 13, 1993)

The song reflects the need to escape through drugs and the desperation of the existence. The first scene opens with the father snorting some lines of cocaine. The mother enters and asks accusingly what the father is doing and the first violent incident occurs. The violence escalates throughout the play. In one scene the children (brother and older sister) are on stage and the parents are out of sight arguing about the way the father treats his step-son. The father's voice is heard by the audience. He screams at the mother, "He's not my son. He's your son. You screwed some guy to get him, not me" (Transcribed videotape Mar.13, 1993).

Many of the youth have lived in "blended" families and one wonders how many times they have heard those lines. As the play unfolds, the violence escalates. The son is detained by the police for "possession of a lethal weapon and hanging around with a drug dealer," the daughter attempts suicide, and throughout the play, as the mother is battered, she slowly learns a traditional dance. In the end the mother, who at first "Can't get it" when she tries to dance, finally "Gets it" and learns to dance as the family begins to heal. The father, like the son, is detained by the police for associating with the same drug dealer. His life finally hits bottom.

Sunk by his addiction and violence the father finally agrees to seek counselling.

The story of *Silent Cries* reflected the lives of the group members. The generational dimension of these problems was effectively illustrated when the father and son ran afoul of the law. The daughter, who was played by Susan, accurately reflected her feelings about herself when Susan said:

> No one seems to care for me anymore,
> So right now I'm taking sleeping pills one at a time.
> Maybe if I die they will love me again.

Susan's growing pride in and awareness of Cree culture was reflected in the mourning song. The song was a lament for the state of her life. The mother illustrated the strength and healing that she found in her culture when, at the end of the play, she finally "got it" (learned to dance). The father also illustrates a more sinister element of this desperate situation when he agrees, like Pam did in *Spider*, to "get counselling." The desperation lies in the pain of the situation and the sinister element in the internalized blame the victim mentality. I will come back to this important point in the next chapter. But for now, on with this stage of the group's development.

After several performances for Native audiences at conferences, treatment centers, and a cultural camp, elements of Cree culture began to appear in our plays. For example, in *Silent Cries* the woman in the abusive relationship learns a traditional dance as the play progresses. However, it is only at the end of the play when the relationship shows promise of healing that she finally learns to dance. Following a performance of *Silent Cries* an audience member asked one of the group where the "pow wow" dancing in the play came from. Cecil, a Downtown Group member, answered:

> What it is like the spirituality of the pow wow that's all broken down at first because the family seems to be all broken up, and as the family starts to come together and start acting as one.... It all seems to come together (Transcription of *Silent Cries*, March, 1993)

This response indicates the sense of healing that some group members found in their culture. The mother and father in *Silent Cries* were caught in the grip of family violence. Lorne played the father and his commonlaw wife Carol, the mother. Lorne and Carol were in the midst of a violent relationship in their daily lives. They were embroiled in their own version of *Silent Cries*.

In a later interview with Lorne, I discussed his role in *Silent Cries* with him. I mentioned to him how frightened I was when I discovered that he was caught in a violent relationship while we were developing and performing the play. If we had known at the time that he was involved in a violent relationship, I told him, I would have advised him not to take part in public performances of the play. The emotions that are stirred during performance and the blurring of the line between the reality of the play and the reality of their lives could have put both Lorne and Carol at risk. However, in Lorne and Carol's case, I was not aware of the seriousness of their situation until we were deep into performing. In Lorne's words,

> I owe a lot to that play. I was working through past issues that were just stuck in there. Like I didn't really think about them and I could never really figure out why I was such a violent person. ... And I never knew why until I did that play. It just kind of resurfaced everything. I had nightmares about the stuff, it was weird.

Lorne went on to talk about how it felt performing *Silent Cries* for an audience. He said,

> I still had the view that I couldn't believe it was happening to other people... . That's when I knew that there was other shit out there not just my pile of crap, but there's other crap out there (Personal communication, December 21, 1995).

The knowledge that they were not alone was important for the group. They wanted to let others know what was going on in their lives and that each person could, if she/he chose, change the circumstances of their lives. As Don said in his earlier interview, "I found it quite touching that they [the audience] would take it in [the play] and embrace it and say ...Wow, that's the same thing that happened to me" and comments such as "I was in WIN house [a shelter for abused women] three times..." and "It shows we can break the circle and don't have to live like that" recorded earlier (August 13, 1991) at a Poundmaker Lodge performance give some indication of the impact that the play had on some audience members. We were aware of the impact that the play had on audiences and took every precaution to become familiar with the locations of shelters and the whereabouts of counsellors wherever we performed.

The problem of violence in Lorne and Carol's relationship was a difficult one to overcome. Whenever we performed *Silent Cries*, we cautioned the audience about the nature of the play, pointed out the brochures and other literature that we had with respect to family violence, and the location of safe houses in their area. Lorne and Carol were living in the drama house through the depths of the problem. They had both read the literature we had collected. I had many discussions with both of them and on some occasions, called in outside counsellors. Through it all Lorne considers his role in *Silent Cries* and the subsequent objectification of his violent actions pivotal in the taming of his violent behaviours.

Stability

The establishment of the house was critical to the development of the Downtown Group. It provided Lorne, Don, Melissa, and eventually Susan stability when they needed it. This sense of stability, of not having to worry where to stay tomorrow night or next week, combined with the empowerment that comes from having some control over what previously had seemed like insurmountable problems, gave the youth the chance to cast their gaze towards the future. When they looked to the future many of the youth saw education as being most important. They registered in the local high schools in the fall of 1992 and began what we hoped would be a successful high school semester. With this need identified, we solicited volunteers from the University of Alberta and began a tutoring program in our house/office. Despite the remedial help, after a few months some of the youth began to drop out of school again. The discussions that we had at our regular Wednesday evening drama meetings during this period began to focus on school and the difficulties that some of the youth were having. I might add at this point that most of the youth in the group were mature beyond their years. They survived by their wits in a hostile environment. Despite the lack of a formal education they were, for the most part, very perceptive young people. This perception can conflict with the attitudes of some professionals such as teachers, social workers, and counsellors who can be patronizing. For example, consider this story that we dramatized in a Wednesday drama meeting and which was part of the inspiration for us to begin a new play about racism. I asked Lorne about his experience at school during the few months he attended. He said,

> It was harsh man. Mrs. Victor, that wicked woman. [I was] trying not to swear so much. [She was] sitting there lecturing me and Tom about how because we were native we're not going to make it anywhere in life. Well, we're acting [we told her].

[Lorne was referring to his part in the Downtown Group and being paid a wage for rehearsals and performances. The wage was very important to the group members. It meant recognition and a bit of money which was always in short supply. In the following piece of dialogue, I have given Mrs. Victor a voice. In the interview Lorne paraphrased Mrs. Victor's words to me.]

Mrs. Victor:
How much are you making?

Lorne:
Six bucks an hour

Mrs. Victor
Yeah, well where's six bucks an hour going to get you in a couple of years. You guys are native. You have a disadvantage against everybody. You guys are stupid .... .

[I have difficulty imagining a teacher telling students that they are stupid. This however, was Lorne's recollection and that perception had an impact for both him and Tom.]

Lorne to Joe:
And this is a teacher/advisor who's supposed to be there to help you. If you've got any problems you're supposed to go to your student advisor... . I had a problem with one of the teachers. Remember I was going back and forth to the hospital and the doctors and that to get my ulcers

checked out.

Joe:
Yeah

Lorne:
I walk in with a note telling them why I had missed three days of school. [The teacher said]. "Oh it's the disappearing Mr. Lorne. Was there like, a Pow Wow in town that no one knows about? Were you drunk and passed out somewhere?"

Joe:
Is that what the teacher said?

Lorne:
Yeah, the Math teacher in front of everybody, and you know how those classes are: twenty, thirty people in a class and they're all sitting there laughing.

Joe:
That must have made you feel good.

Lorne:
Well, I stood up and told the guy to fuck himself and took off. He said "if you don't smarten up I'll throw a chalk brush at your head." I said go ahead I'll chuck it right back at you. Pissed me right off. Went down and talked to my advisor about it. She gave me shit. Told her to fuck herself and walked out of there. That's when me and Tom took off from school. Man those were harsh times. I couldn't believe that. Then I started doing correspondence at the house.

Despite that experience and other negative experiences the youth had on their return to the school system, they still saw education as being important. Their reasons though were instrumental. That is, education was seen as a way out, as the route to a better life, a way to break the hold of social workers, counsellors, substance abuse and violence, of the conditions of a life dominated by structural violence. Failing at school is, in a sense, leaving the chance for a better life behind.

After several of the youth dropped out of school, we still had our volunteer tutors who came to the house/office regularly. The youth still had the desire to complete high school and looked to us to assist them in that endeavour. We arranged for correspondence courses and cleared space in the office/house for the students to work, assisted by volunteer tutors. As our correspondence school population grew, Lorne said half jokingly, "You should start a school." Other students thought it was a good idea. We applied to Alberta Education and Inner City High School began in February of 1993 with seven members of the drama group and two of their friends. The emergence of Inner City High School, however, is a development that will be discussed in the next chapter. The creation of the play *They Can't be Trusted* and the issues surrounding it are the topic of the next section.

They Can't be Trusted

They Can't be Trusted was created in response to the youths' understanding of and experiences with racism. The play is set in a school on a reservation where all the students but two are native. The native students are racist against the white students. The whites are the target of racial slurs and in school are told "Whites sit in the back." The school scene was inspired by Lorne and Tom's experience in the local high school. The White youth in the play are portrayed as drunks and are taken advantage of. They are convinced by the native youth to go to one of their houses after a party. Seeing the Whites drunk, the native parent tells her daughter, "What are you doing with these people Carol? I've told you I don't want them in my house" (Video tape, April, 1994). The play "weaves together many different elements, offering a complex and challenging picture of the experience of racism." The play remained true to the popular theatre form in that "There were no easy answers offered." It is as the group members stated in the talk-back session ,"All of our life experiences--everyone's life combined into one" (Paul, Boyle McCauley News, July/August 1994). The play presented a challenge to the audience when the cast made it clear that the elimination of racism is up to all of us. The final line of the play--after the group presented their experiences to the audience--was the question, "So what should we do now? Yeah!" the actors shouted, pointing at the audience." What should we do?" (Transcribed Video tape, April, 1994). After challenging the audience by presenting the group's experience with racism, the actors then offered hope by acknowledging that it was up to each one of us to solve the problem of racism and by stating that "what happened to us in the past can never be changed but what happens to us in the future can be changed" (Video tape, April, 1994).

Racism and the challenge of the future are central elements in the presentation of *They Can't Be Trusted.* There is, however, much more. Central to the play are the cultural elements introduced by the youth, a result of their growing pride in themselves and awareness of their traditional culture. The play begins with the cast entering one by one and sitting in a circle. When the circle is complete, a dancer comes on stage and dances around the circle. Then a group member in the role of an elder rises from the circle and begins a monologue that evokes the wisdom of an elder. As she speaks to the audience, the Elder tells the story of racism from the perspective of Canada's First Nations People. The Elder's speech was written by Susan and in my estimation is representative of what Susan has learned since she first came to the group in 1989. Susan, playing the Elder, comes on stage at every scene change and presents the audience with pieces of the ongoing monologue. I have reproduced the monologue below as it was originally written.

> A long time ago before the white man came, when the buffalo were wild and free, people used to live in harmony. Back then we didn't know what racism was. We didn't discriminate against each other because of the colour of our skin or the language we spoke. It was easy because we all had the same colour of skin. Only our language was different. Even though our language was different we didn't think we were better than anyone else. They say you must give respect in order to get respect. You must remember that no one is better than you and you are not better than anyone else. Today people have forgotten that and maybe when you watch this play you'll remember it again.
>
> Racism is a hard subject to deal with and it affects everyone in some way. It affects our children the most because they have to confront it every day. What our children learn during their childhood affects how they are in the future. A long time ago we treated our children with respect. We didn't hit our children or abuse them in any way. We knew that our children were the future and without them we would be nothing. Without our children to carry on our names and our knowledge we as a people would not have survived.
>
> It wasn't until the whiteman came that we learnt what racism was. The

> whiteman came in search of land and in their travels they met the native people, but the language difference and the colour of our skin made a barrier to hard to break so they tried forcing us off our land. At first the natives complied and moved further back. Then the whiteman became greedy in their search for gold and land that they pushed the natives further and further from their ancestral homes. When the natives fought back they fought to protect their food, their homes and their lives. And for there efforts they were called savages and there battles were called massacres. In their fight for dominance over each other the seed of racism began to grow like weed and then began the seed of racism between the natives and the whiteman.
>
> When the whiteman came they took away our lands and confined us to reservations. They thought of us as primitive and savage, without a god. So they tried converting us to Christians. When the natives didn't comply they took away our children and forced them into residential schools. They told them that their language and their culture were the devil's work. If a child was caught speaking their language or practising their ceremonies they were strapped with a leather belt or their heads were shaven bald. When these children grew the seed of racism grew with them. Even though this happened many generations ago it still affects our lives today. So today we are trying to heal the hurt and pain caused in the past. In order for us to survive in this world together, we must learn to overcome the barriers that have been built through out the years. For that to happen we must all learn to work together.
>
> I believe racism begins at home. What you teach your children affects how they treat each other. Some of those children that were raised in those residential schools were so ashamed of being native that they washed their face every day trying to scrub the brown off their skin. Some grew up with hatred and bitterness and when they were older they began to drink and they taught there children what they learnt in the residential schools. The hurt, the pain, and the anger was passed down from generation to generation. Even though we can't change the past we can still change the future. It's up to you as parents, teachers, friends, and relatives. You decide how our children's future is going to be, you decide if a child will grow up hurt and angry. It's up to you now, you set the example. *E'xsa*, enough: that is all I have to say, thank you for listening, *hihi* (Susan, 1993).

For Susan, the monologue represented the reasons for the circumstances that she and other First Nations people find themselves in today. It represented Susan's *conscientization*. She moved from coming to terms with her social reality, her addictions and propensity for self-blame to looking critically at her reality. Susan saw her reality as part of a historical process that began with colonization and resulted in her marginalization and the marginalization of Canada's First Nations people. This was a leap that other group members have not chosen to make. I asked Susan how she thought this happened. I said to her,

Joe:
You just managed to put it all together into a story. I mean I've talked to you before, about how the drama was for you. I talked to you quite a bit about that and how you felt about it and the confidence that you developed. One thing I haven't talked to you about was just for you and for some people, who really began on their own to bring native or traditional culture into some of the plays that we were doing. It was a thing that just kind of happened, all of a sudden there was some dancing, there was an elder, all of these things just sort of came around the same time. Why do you think that was?

Susan:
I don't know. It's almost like a revolution. Cause it was happening....like around the times that we were doing *They Can't Be Trusted* and stuff like that a lot of the native issues that were being quieted down were being brought up. And people weren't afraid to talk. And I guess they figured that it was all right to do it. A lot of the history involving natives, like with the Europeans and that made us mad. A lot of it sort of made what it is today. If there wasn't any residential schools, and if natives weren't put on reservations and brought down so much and weren't treated so badly, then I don't figure there would be as many natives out there on the street as there is right now. Because a lot of it is passed down. Like you learn from what your parents teach you and from what your parents do. That's how a child learns. They're not born knowing this knowledge. What they know is what they're taught. And if a person is taught to be ashamed of themselves, if they're taught to hurt other people, then they'll keep on teaching that. Like if a father raises his hand to his children, and hits them, then you can bet that child will grow up to raise his hand to his children. ... And a lot it is native awareness...they're starting to be aware of that. And they're starting to be a power and take it back. This is my culture. I have a right to be proud of who I am and what I do and what I am. And no one can say that what I am is wrong, because it's not. If it were wrong, I wouldn't have been doing it in the first place. It's just something that I've known.

Implicit in Susan's words is the fact that she has, intellectually at least, moved from blaming herself for her problems to seeing her present reality as part of a historical process.

They Can't Be Trusted was performed for a variety of audiences and organizations both native and non-Native. The play was in demand by many groups. Communities facing problems of racism, activists working for the elimination of racism, and other concerned groups requested performances.

Eventually, the play began to lose meaning for the group members and we had to say no to requests that we perform. This process can be compared to the Rolling Stones singing *Satisfaction* for the 20th year in a row. After performing the play over and over again, the group grew tired of the play and of the topic of racism. It wasn't until 2 years later when we were developing a play on poverty and its debilitating effects that racism was mentioned again in a serious way. As part of the development process, we (the Downtown Group now working out of Inner City High School) had a discussion about the causes of poverty and problems of abuse that often accompany conditions of poverty. In that discussion I asked, "How is it that people find themselves in the positions that we were illustrating?" We were developing scenes around abusive family relationships and children ending up living on the street. Lorne replied, "I hate to say it but racism." I asked for more information. Lorne said, "The white man came and took our land and treated us as if we were not as good as they were." Someone else replied "Yeah and put us in residential schools." Sam added that people never learned parenting skills and passed the abuse and ways of living on from one generation to the next (personal communication, November 27, 1996}. I was pleasantly surprised by the conversation and by the level of *conscientization* that was taking place. However, back to performances of *They Can't Be Trusted.*

Performances were usually difficult. Sponsors may have been intent on exposing the evil of racism, but audiences were not always as enthusiastic. The play was usually well received but it challenged the audience and placed the problem of racism in their laps when, at the end of the play, the audience was asked, "Yeah, what should we do?" Applause at most performances was polite rather than enthusiastic. Some groups, such as the National Youth Convention in Kanaskis, were offended by the performance (October, 1994). Discussion was insubstantial and uneasy. The largely white middle-class audience didn't readily accept responsibility for the problem. I hesitate to use the white middle-class term, but in this case it is an accurate descriptor. For other groups, such the youth in EYOC, the need was more immediate. There is often racial tension in the jail. We were brought in to help ease the tension. Our performance, it was hoped, would bring problems to the surface and be a catalyst for discussion. In that sense, the presentation was a success. In the discussion which followed the play, one audience member commented, "Most of us have experienced what you showed in your play, but we are afraid to talk about it"(September 1994). In the audience, like in the jail, there was a high percentage of native people. They were able to relate to the world of the play and connect it to their own reality. Jackie Fiala, Native Programs Coordinator at the Center, was able to do some follow up after we left. The follow up consisted in, wherever possible and wherever there was an expressed interest, continuing contact and discussion with the inmates who had seen the play.

We went on to perform *They Can't Be Trusted* for the First General Assembly of the North American Alliance For Popular and Adult Education (NAAPAE), an umbrella group that united social activists from Canada, United States, Mexico, and other parts of the world. The audience responded enthusiastically to the play and engaged the actors in a substantial discussion following the performance. The audience was composed of "over 170 popular and adult educators who work in a variety of sectors... " (NAAPAE, 1994:1). In NAAPAE's annual report following the assembly, the authors reviewed our performance. "The play was well crafted and showed depth of understanding of the issues they presented... . The audience responded with great appreciation of their candidness, wisdom, and humour" (NAAPAE, 1994, p. 33). This performance, though, was a matter of preaching to the converted. However, audience responses to *They Can't Be Trusted*, ran the range that I have outlined above, from offended to enthusiastically responsive. With the production of *They Can't Be Trusted*, the content of our plays assumed a broader perspective. Table 5 examines this change and provides a striking example of the growing sophistication of the group's analysis.

Table 5

Content of Plays

Title	Substance Abuse	Prostitution	Abusive Relationships	Desperation	Self-Blame
Spider	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Silent Cries	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
They Can't Be Trusted	Looking for root causes	No	Looking for root causes	No	No
*** The presence of hope has been a constant in all plays**					

Source: Synopsis of *Spider* (n.d. approximately 1991); transcription of *Silent Cries* (March, 1993); transcription of *They Can't Be Trusted* (April, 1994).

The production of *They Can't Be Trusted* added several new elements to Inner City performances. Up to this point, the content of our plays had a personal focus with immediate connections to the greater community. With *They Can't Be Trusted*, the focus assumed a wider perspective that included root causes for what were previously seen as personal issues. For example, when we performed at a meeting of The Canadian Association For Racial Harmony (October 15, 1992) Fil Fraser, former Human Rights Commissioner for Alberta, and other black participants spoke of their feelings and experiences with racism and racist attitudes. The audience members at this meeting, in my estimation, were from the middle to upper middle class sectors of society. I thought it was important for the group to have this discussion with audience members who were, in the youths' words, "fancy people." The discussion showed that racism can touch us all, not only people from the inner city. With participation in discussion periods, the youth realized that the issues which impacted them also impacted members of the greater community. With the creation of *They Can't Be Trusted*, the root causes responsible for many of the issues in our plays were understood by some to have originated in the colonial process. This critical understanding of history, as detailed in Table 6, was not present in any of our previous plays.

Table 6

Elements of *They Can't Be Trusted* Not Present in Other Plays				
Colonialism	Injustice	Racism	Cultural Destruction	Substance Abuse Introduced By Europeans
Residential Schools	More Injustice	More Racism	More Cultural Destruction	Substance Abuse Passed on to Children

Source: Transcribed video tape of *They Can't Be Trusted* (1994)

This analysis represented quite an intellectual leap for some members of the group. Their role in the historical process became clear. The role was no longer that of an object being acted upon but a subject empowered to act and become an active participant in the historical process. This altered sense of history is evident in Susan's words. She tells us,

> You decide how our children's future is going to be, you decide if a child will grow up hurt and angry. It's up to you now, you set the example. *E'xsa* enough, That is all I have to say, thank you for listening, *hihi* (Transcription of *They Can't Be Trusted*, Susan, 1993).

We performed *They Can't Be Trusted* for longer than we performed any other play. We were constantly being asked to perform the play in communities plagued by problems of racism. In these cases we entered into a charged atmosphere. We provoked the audience and brought issues to the surface. My role as sound and light person operating the equipment in the midst of the audience became quite uncomfortable at times. I had developed a feel for the audience and the feelings I perceived were not always reassuring. We became skilled at sizing up a potential audience and then deciding whether it was appropriate for us to perform for them or not.

New developments, though, shifted our focus to more formal approaches to education. The opening of the Inner City High School (ICHS) began to assume a more prominent place in Inner City programming and made it more difficult for us to find the necessary time to rehearse and perform.

Inner City High School

Since the opening of Inner City High School (ICHS) in 1993, the focus of our work slowly begun to shift to the school and providing the necessary resources for students to complete a high school diploma. The school began at the request of the youth in the Downtown Group and has grown by word of mouth to accommodate over 60 youth. The school began with Susan, Melissa, Tom, Lorne, Carol and a few other Boyle Street Group members.

ICHS began as a provincially accredited private school. This status, however, placed serious constraints on the amount of financial support available to our school. As a private school, Inner City High School received approximately one third of the financial support per student that a school within the public system received. Students attending ICHS were unable to access Student Finance or other student assistance programs due to our private status. After one and a half years of operating under severe financial constraints and attempting to address what we perceived to be injustices, ICHS entered into discussions with Edmonton's Public and Catholic School Boards and subsequently into an agreement with Edmonton Catholic Schools under Alberta Education's Outreach Programs. We have, in a sense, "come into the fold." Before concluding this chapter, I will provide a brief update on some of the Boyle Street Group members.

The Downtown Group (1996)

Don

After some full time work with Inner City facilitating workshops and some administrative duties, Don secured a full-time position with a local social service agency and retired from the Downtown Group. At this time he is employed as a resident manager with a local social agency that provides housing for street youth. Previous to that, Don worked on a research project for the Edmonton Social Planning Council interviewing prostitutes and exploring some of their concerns through popular theatre. His role was to gather information that would lead to the establishment of support programs.

Melissa

Melissa attended Inner City High for two semesters. She had begun to make progress and in some areas was approaching the Grade 10 level. It was, however, slow going. She wrote gripping stories of street life and showed raw promise as a writer, but Melissa had difficulty maintaining a level of attendance that would lead to academic success. The pull of street life and the desire for relationships kept her away from school. Melissa was, at the time, living in the drama house but not in a manner that we could support. To continue living in the house we told her that she needed to change her habits. Then one day she was gone. We did not have contact with Melissa for almost a year. When she did contact us, Melissa announced that she was six months pregnant and living with her mother. Melissa was on social assistance and lived with her mother until the baby was about six months old. The last contact I had with Melissa was about eight months ago. At that time she was living on her own as a single parent and working as a waitress in a bar. She told me that she planned to return to school as soon as possible.

Tom

Tom was associated with the group for approximately 4 years. Tom, now 19, is a big boy and looks rather fearsome. When he was about 16, Tom told me that he wanted to work in a day care. I knew that he liked children and despite Tom's appearance he was quite gentle. One summer at his request we arranged a part-time position for Tom working in a day care. The reports from the day care were positive and Tom seemed to enjoy the work. However, in the months to follow, things changed for Tom. Despite his low literacy skills (approximately Grade 5) Tom graduated from Eastside Junior High School to Victoria Composite High School (Vic). At Vic he entered a vocational program where, to the best of my knowledge, his academic deficiencies were not addressed. Programs such as Tom's carry a stereotype or stigma with them. Students in the program are seen as being slow or not quite bright enough to function in the regular stream. Tom had being slow or not quite bright enough to function in the regular stream. Tom had his first serious brush with the law at Vic. He was charged with robbery. Tom "rushed" (to confront with violence and the intent to rob) another student and took whatever money he had. This act was out of character for Tom. It was during this period that he turned mean. After the rushing incident and while awaiting his court appearance, Tom was picked up on his way to school. He was late but he was on his way to school. The police drove Tom, protesting, past our school which is very close to downtown police headquarters and locked him in the holding cells for breaching a court order. Tom was out on bail for the rushing incident. A condition of his bail was that he attend school. The police, however, picked Tom up while he was on the way to school. I bailed him out that evening. The incident was unfortunate to say the least. Tom now had another charge to contend with. After consulting a lawyer and several court appearances, Tom managed to avoid being sent to jail. Shortly after these events, Tom's mother left for Sturgeon Lake, leaving Tom with whomever of his older brothers and sisters who would have him. Tom's family members were beset by problems of substance abuse. After encountering difficulties with his living arrangements and bouncing from place to place, Tom eventually came to live in the drama house. By this time, however, he had begun to drink and was given to violent behaviour while under the influence. After a short time in the drama house, Tom became very difficult to live with. We came to a mutual agreement that Tom leave the house. The reports I heard regarding Tom's behaviour and habits after he left the house were not good. The last I heard before I spoke to Tom again was that he had beaten and kicked another young man outside his sister's house. It seems that Tom was involved in a dispute with someone in his sister's house and had somehow been locked out of the house. The young man was watching what was going on while Tom, drunk, was banging on his sister's door trying to get her to let him back in the house. Tom approached the young man and beat him badly. The police were called and Tom was charged with aggravated assault. He is now serving a 9 month sentence in Fort Saskatchewan Jail.

Susan

Susan continued to perform with the Downtown Group until a few months after her first child was born. She had wanted a child since she was fourteen and finally became a mother at seventeen. I was honoured by being asked to be the godfather of Susan's child. Susan said that when her child was born, she had the love she needed. Susan put it this way:

> In my view I feel that you need three types of love. You need love from your parents. You need love from a spouse or boyfriend or someone. And then you need the parental love, love of a mother and child. And once you get these three loves, everything balances out. Like for myself that's all I needed. I didn't have the family support and love, I had it but hardly. When I joined the group they became the family and you became the father. So parental and family. When I met Ernie it was shaky at first, it's still a bit shaky but not much [Ernie is Susan's boyfriend]. There was just that one that I was missing, and I don't know, I believe that after all that there was still that one that I was missing. I needed my little son (personal communication, December 12, 1994).

Despite a life that contained the love that Susan needed, things did not always run smoothly. She still had problems with alcohol and partied with family members and their friends. For most of the first year of the baby's life, Susan did not drink (well maybe a little), but she soon fell back into old habits. She tried to go to school but could not attend on a regular enough basis to complete any courses. Finally, she hit bottom with her drinking and almost lost everything: school, boyfriend, and child. Child Welfare was called to investigate Susan's neglect of her son. Susan and Ernie had separated and he wanted to take their son. After some discussion of these issues, Susan agreed to attend Poundmaker's Treatment Center to deal with her addictions.

After completing the 28-day Poundmaker program, Susan came back to school with a new determination that has held for a year now. She is pregnant again and back together with Ernie and her son. Ernie was a member of the Downtown Group for about three years. He is a 24-year old Cree man from Hobbema, Alberta. Susan and Ernie both attend Inner City High. Ernie intends to attend university next year and Susan is working hard to complete her high school diploma. With such intelligence and determination, I am sure she will. Susan has held up under conditions that damaged all her family members. Her three sisters are hard-core intravenous drug users and prostitutes. Her two brothers are both in jail serving long sentences. The fact that Susan is still alive and trying to make a decent life for herself and family is testimonial to the strength of the human spirit.

Lorne

Lorne is now 19 and still an active member of the Downtown Group. Lorne was 15 when he first came to live in the drama house. He lived in the house for between 3 and 4 years. During that time Lorne came to terms with his own problems of substance abuse, lack of confidence, uncontrollable anger, and violent reactions. Lorne has large gaps in his junior high school background and was pushed through Grade 9 lacking academic skills. Lorne was not attending school when he first came to the drama house. We encouraged him to return to school, which he did only to be asked to leave for allegedly causing trouble in the school. The next school year Lorne registered at a local high school but soon dropped out. Then, after completing a correspondence course he registered at Inner City High School (ICHS). Lorne read his first book from cover to cover at ICHS. He is quite intelligent and will receive his high school diploma this year. During his 3 year career at ICHS, Lorne has come to terms with his propensity to violent behaviour and his problem with substance abuse, recovered from the pain of his mother's sudden death, suffered through a short and violent marriage, and scored above average on the English 30 departmental exam. English 30 is the final high school exam and is marked by the Alberta Department of Education. Lorne is now applying to the University of Alberta in the Faculty of Arts for the 1997-1998 academic year.

When I asked Lorne what role the popular theatre program had in his desire to attend university, he replied, "I saw what good you could do with an education"(personal communication, December 6, 1996).

Summary

We have discussed the difficult social issues faced by many of the youth, issues that at first were not of their own making. Their social circumstances were an accident of birth. The majority of the youth in this study are survivors. Despite the conditions of their environment, they struggle to overcome what many succumb to. The youth are doing their utmost to conquer the pull of substance abuse and fast money. They have most recently set their sights on education as the route to a better life.

Throughout this project we have attempted to create an alternative value system based on trust, respect, and cooperation. In our meetings the implementation of these values created an environment where the youth were able to identify, articulate, and discuss issues that impede their own development. Once these issues were identified, they were objectified through drama and discussed in our group meetings. The project was taken one step further when these issues were taken out to the greater community and discussed as social problems rather than personal problems. This process has unlimited potential for *concientization*.

I understand *conscientization* to mean a process whereby project participants engage in action to transform their reality. Making group members aware of their oppression, however, has not been a direct objective of this project. At first the focus was on personal issues such as abuse, violence, racism, and their immediate impact on the lives of the participants. After some time and through participation in post performance discussions, personal issues were seen to be social issues that are part of a greater problem affecting the community at large. The group's community is one of experience rather than of geography. For the most part, the community is characterized by poverty, unemployment, lack of a formal education, various forms of abuse, the attendant violence, and dependence on social assistance. The community can be urban or rural. Urban community members generally reside in the inner city and rural members on First Nation reserves. As Susan has articulated, when awareness grows and understanding deepens, some members begin to reflect on the historical nature of their marginalization. Recently when the group was discussing poverty and abuse, the subject of a new play we were developing, Lorne, in a group discussion exploring the roots of the poverty and marginalization that affects many Metis and First Nations people, made the following comments when I asked the group why some people are poor and others are not. Lorne responded, "Its racism." I asked for further clarification. He said, "The Europeans came and took our land." (program notes (November 27, 1996). Historical awareness of oppressive conditions that impact the lives of people today is the beginning of *conscientization*, but in the Freierian sense mere awareness is not enough. Awareness must be part of a historical commitment to make changes, to create and mold the conditions of one's life.

However, if one's understanding of *conscientization* implies the realization of personal oppression in order that one can liberate one's self and transform the concrete conditions of one's reality, then, for members of the Downtown Group, it is an extended process that may or may not take place. If one understands popular theatre to be a vehicle of *conscientization*, then it must be, as it is for Ross Kidd, part of a process of organization and struggle (Kidd & Manumur, 1984 p. 32). To this end for Kidd a "popular theatre program works when there is an organization which can take up the momentum--the motivation and heightened awareness--created by the drama and build on it" (Kidd, (1979 pp. 3-9). Conscientization is the objective in many popular theatre/popular education programs. In the Downtown Group, and in other Inner City programs, *conscientization* is possible and does take place. The time when this happens is dictated by the readiness of the youth to engage in critical reflection on the conditions of their social reality. Inner City High School developed out of the popular theatre process--at the group's request--to assume the role of the organization intended to take up the momentum created by the drama and to build on it. *Conscientization* in this sense is not promoted through a series of workshops or one-shot programs. *Conscientization* is part of an ongoing process.

In the Downtown Group, conscientization was seen as secondary to stopping the bleeding, not providing a bandaid but stopping the bleeding. We were and are dealing with youth who, for the most part, have been damaged by their environment, damaged before reaching the age of 7. The social environment that these youth were nurtured in bears many of the worst characteristics of an urban underclass. It is generational and all- consuming. The debilitating effects of family violence and sexual abuse can and do dominate one's life, often resulting in permanent damage to self-confidence, self-esteem, social, and intellectual development.

Problems of self-confidence and self-esteem are often combined with an early introduction to substance abuse. The abuse offers the abuser an escape from reality--but the escape is short-lived. The abuse becomes a monster that must be fed. To feed the monster, one most often turns to crimes such as drug dealing, prostitution, and other criminal activities. Escape is rare. Escape attempts are often thwarted by early

socialization: the influence of family members; the lack of financial and social support; the lack of skills, social and educational; the social service bureaucracy which saps the dignity of its clients; and most recently in Alberta by the mean-spirited, neo-conservative attack on social programs. It is the structural aspects of this waste of human potential to which I will turn in the next and final chapter of this dissertation.

CHAPTER VIII
CONCLUSION

Introduction

In this the concluding chapter I will explore the connections that this research has revealed between the day-to-day reality of the youth and the theoretical constructs of meritocracy, resistance, reproduction, and the young peoples' experience of living a reality dominated by various forms of structural violence. The structural violence present in the lives of the youth in this project has, for some, been mediated by the peaceful yet critical pedagogy of popular theatre and participatory research. I will next revisit the theory and practice of popular theatre and participatory research and the role that they play in nurturing and sustaining a peaceful and critical pedagogy. The concluding section of this chapter will focus on recommendations that the project has suggested for theatre workers, educators, policy makers, and community workers. By way of conclusion I will point to suggested directions for further and necessary research and the creation of more long-term developmental programs for marginalized youth..

Meritocracy

The social problems of poverty, violence, crime, drug and alcohol abuse, welfare dependency, and apathy are dominant cultural traits that characterize the background of most of the youth in this study. The behaviours are coping mechanisms that, in this research, are generational, deep-seated, and maintained by a complex pattern of social and psychological processes that create a situation where the members of an underclass blame themselves for problems that are socially constructed. After unsuccessful attempts to succeed at school, to find a job, and to build a better life than one has known, the tendency is to give up. The process of giving up, for most, includes a prolonged period of self-blame. The youth blame themselves for not being able to *rise above* the class that they were born into.

According to the principles of meritocracy, the most able individuals undergo the necessary training for a hierarchy of vocational roles and, based on their own merit, assume their places in the social structure. If the youth are successful in their training--according to these principles--they will be able to *rise above* the limits of their environment and, based on their own merit, cut themselves a piece of the *good life*. The ideology of meritocracy is a dominant theme in capitalist societies. It is incorporated into the structure of social institutions such as schools, government bureaucracies, factories, and offices (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Li, 1988). The ideology of meritocracy pervades our social institutions, justifies a blame the victim mentality, and provides a rationalization for the inequalities of the capitalist system (Li, 1988, pp. 5-6).

The youth in this project and many other youth have the deck stacked against them before they start. Scarred by abuse and other forms of structural violence, many marginalized youth such as those in this study enter our schools only to be labelled slow learners, behaviour problems, and non attenders. This process contributes to a self-fulfilling prophecy that results in many youth dropping out of school before completing high school and, in some cases, junior high school. In their study of working class youth in Ontario schools Curtis, et al., (1992) concluded that children from working class and poor families continue to be labelled as slow learners and streamed into dead end programs that encourage them to drop out of school. The young people in this study were pushed through junior high school and were not academically prepared to enter high school. Lorne, for example, after 9 years of schooling, read his first book from cover to cover at Inner City High School. Lorne, like many of the youth, is quite bright but is a product of his environment and social situation. It is noteworthy to point out that in 1996, after attending Inner City High School for 3 years, Lorne scored a 70 (B) on the English 30 government exams. English 30 is the final English literature exam in Alberta's academic high school program. Through projects and programs offered by groups such as the Inner City Youth Development Association, marginalized youth can be given the opportunity to understand and overcome the nature of their own oppression. Many of the youth that I have come into contact with were unsuccessful at junior high school for a variety of reasons, but most salient was their inability to maintain regular attendance. The pattern of irregular attendance at school was set early through the lack of family encouragement or family role models and sometimes through the nature of the interaction between teachers and students. Often teachers, themselves victims of the pressures that a heavy work load and stressful occupation can bring, are not aware of the pressures that many students in inner city schools must come to terms with on a daily basis. Many teachers, despite their best efforts, are limited to a superficial understanding of the cultural reality and background of inner city youth such as the young people that we have been privileged to come to know through this study. This situation is understandable, but it blocks communication and limits the possibilities of education and any form of cognitive or social transformation for the students. Some of the youth, according to the stories they repeatedly told me, have on more than one occasion felt the sting of racist attitudes from teachers. On many occasions the youth in this study had to stay home from school to care for siblings or a parent who was suffering from the effects of drug and/or alcohol abuse. This is quite a common experience for many inner city youth who unable to attend school and who receive little monitoring or modelling in their early school years have difficulty succeeding in high school programs. As a result, the forces of reproduction take their toll. They are often streamed into dead end programs such as those that Tom, Lorne, and others were placed in. In these programs the self-image of many bright students takes a beating, frustration takes its toll, the student drops out, and the cycle of poverty and dependence on social systems begins a process of social reproduction.

Reproduction

Like the youth in this study, I dropped out of school at a young age. When I reflect on the chain of events that led me to leave school at 15, I can trace my leaving through a complex trail of lacks. I lacked confidence in my own ability. I lacked a home environment that was conducive to academic success. I lacked the physical resources to keep myself clothed and equipped, and I lacked academic models. The youth in this project lacked most of the things I mentioned, but their situation was more desperate. What they lacked was much more sinister. Most of the youth lacked a loving and healthy relationship with their parents. Most of the youth lacked a home environment in which they could feel safe from abuse. Most of the youth lacked peace in their lives, and as we have seen from the tables in the previous chapter, lived lives dominated by structural violence. Their lack of academic success in school was a direct result of the structural violence that they lived with on a daily basis

The problems of these young people are generational, and in some cases the solutions will be generational as well. Most of the youth in this project are of First Nation or Metis heritage. Many of their problems can be traced back through generations of mistreatment in residential schools and the resulting loss of culture and pride in themselves. Their childhood years are coloured by a lack of love and by unhealthy parental relationships. The scars run deep. Drugs, alcohol, and suicide are the traditional methods of escape. These methods of coping are passed from generation to generation (Hodgson, 1990). The methods of escape from a life of desperation are also a response to a life dominated by the effects of structural violence.

Throughout this study I was constantly awed by the resiliency and courage of their spirit. Some of the youth have risen above almost insurmountable barriers to complete a high school diploma. Their valiant efforts are commendable and inform us that the forces of reproduction, while strong are not invincible. Overcoming these forces is not a linear process. It is therefore not suprising that while making great strides in their life choices, some still feel the pull of the tried and true methods of coping with adversity. Escape is difficult. However, these pulls are intermittent and punctuated with long spells of sobriety. Some, like Susan, now have a family of their own. Susan is determined not to treat her children as she was treated herself. She is determined to give her family a good life and not reproduce the dysfunctions of her childhood in her own children. For Susan and many others, however, the acid test comes in times of crisis and adversity. The learned methods of coping with stress, frustration, and adversity are just under the surface and appear when one is most vulnerable. However, Susan is determined. In a conversation recently Susan told me that she was the only one in her family who has not had their children apprehended by social services. In this world that is a success.

Structural Violence and a Canadian Underclass

This research has exposed an undercurrent of structural violence that runs through

Canadian society. The existence of structural violence and the reality of an underclass are not generally seen to be part of Canadian society. After all, Canada has been named by the United Nations as one of the best countries in the world in which to live. How can structural violence exist in such a country? Are these not conditions that one finds in countries of the South? Is there a South in the North? Has the Globe and Mail, Canada's national newspaper, scratched the surface when, in a November 16, 1996 article by Jane Gadd on child poverty, professor of social work Maryvn Novick comments on the effects of poverty. Novick put it this way: "Recent population health studies have shown that the impact of poverty on children goes far deeper than a lack of material goods." Digging deeper, another article in the same paper by John Grey goes on to claim that there is "A disaster among native youth" in Canada. Grey points to a suicide rate among native youth that is five times the national average. I have, in chapter VII of this dissertation, pointed to an incarceration rate among native youth that is significantly higher than among the general population.

Structural violence does exist in Canada. Despite the announcement by the United Nations, it is affluence for some and desperation for others. One can, as with the youth in this study, be born into this desperation. Starting life out in a position of desperation subjects children and youth to an uphill battle from the start. Subjected to conditions that some of us cannot even imagine, most of the youth in this study courageously and valiantly strive to escape the violence that characterizes their lives and shed their protective shell, a shell reinforced and maintained with an unspoken toughness. It is this sense of being tough that the first drama programs set out to mediate. For it is only when these personal barriers are lowered that sincere communication can take place and the fears, hopes, and dreams of the individuals revealed.

In Chapter II violence was defined broadly enough to address the inequalities and violent social structures present in some societies. Social, political, economic, and cultural inequalities and injustices create the conditions for and perpetuate the existence of structural violence. Structural violence, it was stated, shows up in unequal power relationships, unequal life chances, and unequal resource distribution. Structural violence then may be defined as injury that occurs to individuals or groups due to differential access to societal resources through the normal operation of the structures and institutions of a society as well as the global system (Webb, 1986).

The youth in this project were born into social conditions that were not of their own making. Some were victimized in residential schools, some in other government supported institutions, some on the street, and some by their own families. Nearly all were born poor. Some of their parents, lacking a formal education, lived a life dependent on welfare hand outs. Like the students in the study by Curtis et al., (1992) study, most of the youth in this study were labelled as slow learners or students with behaviour problems in school and tracked into non-academic streams.

As a class distinction, the category of working class does not provide an accurate description of the youth in this project or of their family background. A more accurate descriptor is the term *underclass*. The term *underclass* has been the subject of much debate and used to justify social policy on both the left and the right (Rodger, 1992; Heisler, 1991; Robinson and Gregson, 1992). By the political right, it has justified a blame the victim attack on social programs. The left, on the other hand, sees the existence of an underclass as the consequence of harsh social policies which foster poverty, unemployment, and hopelessness (Robinson & Gregson, 1992). The identifying characteristics of an underclass are persistent poverty, residence in inner cities, long-term unemployment, long-term welfare dependency, lack of formal training, experience with street crime, and drug and alcohol abuse (Rodger, 1992; Heisler, 1991; Robinson & Gregson, 1992). These characteristics accurately describe the social background of the youth in this study.

For the young people in this study, exploring their reality through popular theatre has illuminated their ongoing struggle to overcome personal and social problems that have left them with deep psychological scars. The roots of many of their problems can be traced to the colonial process. The consequences of this structural violence, while having a profound impact on one's life chances, are not as visible in the North as they are in the South. There are, however, striking similarities.

In Chapter II of this dissertation North/South or core/periphery relationships were discussed and found to create conditions of structural violence for large numbers of people in countries of the South. In the South the impact of structural violence creates a certain population who have internalized their condition through years of socialization in an unjust system. This conditioning is replicated among the poor and marginalized in countries of the North.

The concept of meritocracy results in the oppressed blaming themselves for their own oppression or perceived inadequacies. This unfortunate reality resonates with my own experience and was echoed by Susan in Chapter I when she said, "I never thought I could do anything right. I thought I was a failure at everything and could do nothing at all" (Goldblat & Howarth, 1990, p. 22). Lorne echoed the same conditioning when he said, "I used to walk around with my head hung low thinking that I was no good" (personal communication, August 18, 1994).

Structural violence is perpetrated through the institutions of society, through theoretical constructs such as meritocracy and through the psychology of oppression where victims of structural violence blame themselves for their oppressed conditions. The issues of structural violence, unequal access to life chances, fatalism or self-blame, social, economic, often result in political relationships that weigh heavily in favour of the dominant group or culture often result in poverty, hunger, homelessness, unemployment, violence, and suffering for large numbers of people in both the South and the North. As I have shown, structural violence dominated the lives of the youth in this project and is part of everyday life as it is lived on the margins of society.

However, despite the insidious, all-consuming nature of structural violence this study has shown that it can be overcome. This research has highlighted the efficacy of human agency, the struggles of ordinary people who, provided with the tools and opportunities, can rise above these systemic inequities and begin the process of creating a new reality.

Resistance, Adaptation, and Conscientization

These identifying characteristics and behaviours of the underclass are seen by some theorists as forms of resistance, resistance by the youth to their incorporation into the dominant culture. (Giroux, 1992; Mc Laren 1989). For the yoiuth in this study, though, the behaviours that characterize street culture are part of a complex pattern of behaviours that form an adaptive response to a destructive environment. In the process, however, these adaptive responses catch the youth in a trap that prevents their escape from the lower levels of the social structure. Before the youth had a chance to define their world, it was defined for them. What they had to do was adapt to the environment that they were born into. Notions of resistance, while not articulated, play a small part. In his study of East Los Angeles gang members Frank Logan (1994) drew similar conclusions. He observed that behaviours such as dealing drugs, fighting, and talking ghettoese are adaptive behaviours of youth caught in a marginal culture. This understanding of resistance was not part of my conceptual framework at the outset of this project. At that time, I saw most of what I now understand to be adaptive behaviours as forms of resistance, resistance by the youth to their incorporation into a culture that was, in their view, unattainable. At this time I considered popular theatre to be a vehicle that had the potential to expose the futility of this form of resistance and promote *conscientization*. My thoughts in the early stages of this study conceived of the project and my role in it in the following way. Through popular theatre projects the youth would understand the nature of their oppression and take action to liberate themselves from a life of marginalization. My role as facilitator was to create an environment where this social awareness could blossom.

However, I soon realized that what I understood to be resistance was more a form of adaptation. For me as facilitator, to actively promote *conscientization* would have the potential to destroy the youths' means for coping with a most difficult environment before they had the inner strength to cope with the realizations that I fostered. *Conscientization* was certainly part of the process but it should, I felt, only take place when the youth are ready. Lorne's experience with *conscientization* is based on his own insights and will deepen as he overcomes the damage of his early socialization, the depths of which cannot be probed by a social activist's concern for social justice. The tools are available and *conscientization* does take place, but it happens slowly. Through the popular theatre process contradictions are exposed and analyzed, and adaptive behaviours are shaved away and replaced with inner strength. The youth, based on their own insight and readiness, begin a process of *conscientization* that may or may not reach fruition during the term of this study. If *conscientization* is introduced through a process of intervention before the youth are ready, l the intervenor will destroy the young people's means of coping with a harsh environment. There is more to this than can be resolved with *conscientization* alone. Many of the youth are wounded and bleeding, bleeding from wounds suffered throughout childhood. The wounds need attention, the youths' strength needs to be fortified, and they need to be able to access societal resources such as education. As I began to realize the depth of the culture that I had become immersed in, I began to wonder what good *conscientization* would do if it was not part of a long-term process that addressed these fundamental issues and provided for the developmental needs that the youth identified as they identified them. It was this realization that shaped the nature of this project.

In this project the peaceful and critical pedagogy of popular theatre and participatory action research has given the inarticulate and marginalized a voice and allowed the youth to engage in a process of cultural production. It affirmed their experience. The youth realized that they were not alone in their suffering and, given the tools, could break the cycle of desperation that they were trapped in. This was an empowering process. It empowered the youth to assume responsibility for the choices that they made in their lives. The youth used theatre to illuminate and shed a critical light on their experiences. This educative process resulted in the production of knowledge that probed the depths of their reality and in some cases its historical background. The knowledge that the youth produced was honed by a sense of social responsibility. Popular theatre gave them a voice with which to explore and analyze the nature of their own oppression. The pedagogy of popular theatre gave the youth a tool with which to explore their social reality and in the process provided them with the means to overcome the limits of their environment. In most cases this knowledge led the youth to become active participants in the production of their own history and in the creation of their own reality. They then created a play out of the knowledge that they had produced and, through the performances, entered into dialogue with the larger community. The dialogue often took the form of a search for responses to the social problems they were illuminating. The sense of social responsibility and the categories of experience, voice, community, and individual and collective story telling led the youth to insights into a world based on trust, respect, cooperation,and non-violence. These values were in stark contrast to what had been the cultural norm of D.T.A. (don't trust anyone): abuse, lack of respect, conflict, and violence. In this way the young people have become empowered to actively participate in the creation of their own history. Progress has been made but the work is not finished. Each day brings new and familiar challenges.

Throughout this dissertation we have been privileged to follow a group of inner city youth as they struggle to understand and overcome the reality of their background and the nature of their environment. Popular theatre has given them the means with which to express and explore that reality. The participatory character of the research has allowed the youth to identify elements of their reality as they are ready to explore it. This exploration has at times been quite traumatic and demanded great courage from the youth. The voices that give life to this study are voices of marginalized youth, voices not often heard. The voices of the youth give the reader an insight into a reality that is difficult to quantify and not easily considered in the constructs of educational theory. The research has shown that programs intended to address the needs of inner city youth need to be participatory long-term, ongoing, and flexible enough to respond to their needs. The programs should be structured in such a way that the developmental needs identified by the youth can be responded to as they are identified. If programs intended to address the needs of inner city youth are structured in such a way that they acknowledge and respect the day-to-day reality of the youth, then progress will be possible. The youth need to experience success as they progress through the various stages of development. Througout this process the solidarity that the young people found in each other gave them support when they needed it most

Solidarity

It was my sense of solidarity with inner city youth that brought me to this project. That solidarity grew as the project progressed and as the group members discovered solidarity among themselves.

Solidarity was most evident in our weekly meetings and when we toook part in exercises such as the medicine bag. The medicine bag exposed our humanity through each other's joys, hopes, and fears which were revealed in the exercises. When the group shared their stories with each other, our sense of solidarity grew. Our solidarity spread to members of the greater community when we performed at treatment centers such as the Nechi/Poundmaker Institute. The solidarity among group members deepened after each tour. It grew when we took part in workshops sponsored by Change For Children that focused on the conditions of street children in countries such as Brazil. We attempted to add an international dimension to the growing sense of solidarity that the youth were experiencing but were unable to raise the necessary funds.

Change For Children set up a tour of popular (grass roots) organizations some of which worked with street children in Santiago, Chile. The Philippines Educational Theatre Association (PETA) met with us several times over the years with the intent of organizing a program whereby our group would travel to the Philippines, take part in a popular theatre festival and then travel and perform in several communities. These projects and their potential for a deepened sense of international solidarity were never realized.

Now that our performances are not as frequent as they once were and our energies, out of necessity, seem to be focused more on the school than performances there is still solidarity among group members. It is fragile and and at times not as strong as it could be. It is my hope that this sense of solidarity continues to grow, gains more of an international dimension, and has planted its seed in Inner City High School.

Methodological Issues

In the early part of this study I came to see the methodology of popular theatre as having significant potential for the development of inner city youth. The participatory nature of the research provided the youth with the space that they needed to express themselves in and to set the parameters of the study. The collective and participatory process of popular theatre honours the knowledge that the youth bring to group meetings. Popular theatre is critical in the production of new knowledge, knowledge created by the youth about their own situation. Later, as the project developed, this knowledge grew to include a critical perspective on their history and social environment. The direction of this study was set by the youth through their engagement in the collective and participatory nature of the popular theatre process. It is my hope that the research, struggle, and action engendered by this study will continue to have an impact long after the project has faded.

Reflections on Popular Theatre

I found the process of learning about popular theatre to be one of the more challenging that I have undertaken. To create theatre that deals with people's lives, with disclosures of sexual abuse, of violence, addictions, and unfulfilled dreams, and then entering into dialogue with the greater community, many of whom had experienced the similar issues, requires a sensitivity and is a responsibility that I was not prepared for when I began this project. I was humbled by what I learned and realized that the study, if it was to have integrity, needed to be long-term and flexible enough to respond to the needs of the youth as they were identified. Short-term projects cry out for an immediate solution no matter how superficial. A facilitator's lack of experience with and knowledge of a particular community can have a direct impact on the depth and integrity of the popular theatre process. One of my most difficult tasks as popular theatre facilitator in this project was to keep my mouth shut and let the voices of the youth be heard. Another was the need to suspend judgements about the youths' actions as much as possible. When one is not familiar with the culture, conditions, and pressures of a group members' lives the basis for passing judgement sinks out of sight. When a facilitator uses popular theatre to work with a particular community about issues that are of concern to that community, it is possible to be issue specific and take part in a short-term projects. However, this study has shown that the issues of inner city youth are generational, deep seated, and resistant to short-term projects. The danger in short-term projects could be similar to a problem that Boal (1994) recognized in his early work where middle class actors were perscribing solutions for situations that they had not experienced. Forum theatre was Boal's solution for this problem. However, for the youth in this study, Forum theatre, I reasoned, could develop problems similar to those which inspired Boal to create Forum Theatre. If we used the techniques of Forum theatre to explore the youths' reality would we not have audience members proposing solutions to problems they had not experienced? One should not fall into the well-intentioned trap of "thinking we know best for others, to want to protect and activate people in ways that we think best" (Salverson, 1991, p.5). The collective process seemed to offer a methodology with the highest degree of integrity. In this way our work could be long-term and inclusive. For these reasons we consciously chose to use the collective process in the development of this project. The work was improvised for each production, and we chose not to use a script. The play changed in subtle and significant ways after each performance. These changes, where relevant, were inspired by the comments of audience members in post-performance discussion periods, insights by group members. When a new member joined the group the play often changed to reflect that person's experiences. This is a sad comment on the universality of the issues that we were dealing with.

Inner City High School

The focus of my work now (1996) has shifted from stopping the bleeding--although it is still necessary from time to time--to providing youth with a formal education (a high school diploma) in a school program that was requested and shaped by the participants of this study. The school (Inner City High School) ICHS has grown from its original nine students, seven of whom were members of the drama group, to its present roster of over 60 students. We (myself and the other teachers) are still learning, and the suggestions of the youth and the character of daily events, continue to shape the program.

A new dimension has now been added to the work: the need to sensitize other teachers to the reality that they are working in and the attitudes that they hold. The dominance of a blame the victim view of the poor and marginalized affects many of us. To illustrate this point I will relate a recent experience at ICHS. The drama group had been working on a play about poverty and its impact on youth. The crisis of the play centered on how the cycle of poverty and abuse recreated itself in each subsequent generation. In the discussion period, a recently hired teacher commented that "what they need [the youth] is to learn some skills." This suggestion is not completely out of place, but it came in the midst of a discussion about poverty and abuse. There was no acknowledgement or understnding of the pain that poverty created or the barriers that needed to be overcome nor of the structural conditions which foster such marginalization and dysfunction. The view that the poor are poor because they lack skills is partially true. However, this study has shown the superficiality of that view and the depth of the problem. The superficial view, if we care to nurture the potential of marginalized youth, is not one that we can afford our teachers to have

There is a definite need for the University Of Alberta, Faculty Of Education to include in its teacher training program a program of studies that includes an exploration of a pedagogy and curriculum that would respectfully engage marginalized youth. Many teachers are sensitive and respectful. However, many student teachers are not familiar with many of the issues in this study. This limited understanding can create problems for students and teachers, lead to students dropping out of school, and incur enormous costs for our social system. The inner city areas of most urban centers are rife with violence and wasted potential. Can we afford to allow this situation to continue?

At Inner City High School, popular theatre and philosophy create a peaceful environment and pedagogy and along with academic subjects forms an important part of the school programming. Inner City High School (ICHS) is an academic and arts-based senior high school. In other words, we incorporate the arts into the life of the school. Drama and visual art form a regular part of the school day. Music, photography, and video are offered whenever possible. The arts are important to the youth and to their academic development. for they have a healing quality that is calming and encourages participation. Many of the students realize that they can create something that is pleasing and worthwhile. This realization builds confidence and leads to perseverance in academic studies. After some initial upgrading, academic subjects are offered to students at ICHS. The students respond well to this program and find themselves succeeding at courses that they previously thought were only for the brighter students. Many have yet to realize that they are the brighter students.

This transformation of the youth and the direction that they have given to our programming is a testimony to the potential of the youth. Given the tools and shown respect, many of the youth have transformed themselves and their lives from a state grounded in apathy and dysfunction to a state grounded in critical awareness, activity, and hope.

Implications For Further Research

Further research could focus on the psychology of transformation. How do youth who have spent much of their young lives in an environment of abuse and neglect come to terms with their early socialization? How can education programs best respond to youth who are lacking in academic skills, lacking in models that are conducive to academic success, and lacking the very study skills and habits that are necessary for academic success? The addictive behaviours that one can develop living in an environment such as I have described in this study can be necessary as a coping mechanism but often do psychological damage. How can concerned educators best respond to and mediate this process? It is a difficult problem that affects large numbers of our youth?

In response to the number of youth who have previously dropped out of school and now want to return but are unable or unwilling to function in the traditional school system, many outreach schools have opened their doors across Alberta. These schools are officially listed as Outreach Sites by Alberta Education and as such receive full funding. As of October 1996, there were 45 Outreach Schools in Alberta (Outreach Workshop. Red Deer, Oct. 18, 1996). When Inner City High School opened in

February of 1993, there was one other accredited alternative high school in Alberta that I knew of. That school served a similar population to the youth we serve at ICHS.

The growth that has taken place in the last few years highlights the need for the research that I have suggested. The majority of Outreach Programs use correspondence (Distance Learning) materials to accommodate the diversity of their student population. This program of studies, while appropiate in many cases, can limit the creativity of teachers, and the flexibility that is necessary to work with a student population such as I have described. Many of the students that we come in contact with at Inner City High School and in fact most of the youth in this study, had great problems with reading and comprehension. The success of students using Distance Learning materials is built on the students' self-discipline and on the individual students' ability to read and comprehend the information in the learning modules. This is the area where students have the greatest difficulty. Teachers at ICHS began with Distance Learning materials; however, they soon found these to be less than ideal for the students that we serve. To overcome this problem, we began to develop teaching units and offered courses in small groups rather than working with Distance Learning material.

There is a great need for research into pedagogical approaches that would allow marginalized youth to explore the depth of the Alberta high school curriculum. There is also a need for university teacher training programs to respond to this great need with research and course offerings. Most university teacher training programs, to the best of my knowledge, do not respond to this need. This lack incurs great social costs and contributes to the marginalization of large numbers of our youth, youth who could contribute to rather than be a burden on our society and a drain on our scarce resources.

A Concluding Note

I began this project not realizing the depth of the issues that many of the youth were facing. When the project began I thought that using drama to develop self-confidence and provide a means for creative self-expression in inner city children would help prevent the development of destructive behaviours, behaviours that would become more entrenched as the children grew into adulthood. The early Inner City programs gave every indication that this assumption was true. Many children began to express themselves in healthy and constructive ways through drama. April's story and others that I have related in this dissertation underscore the value of using drama to develop self-confidence and provide a means for creative self-expression in inner city youth. While drama can and does build self-confidence and provide for creative self-expression, the youth in this study needed more. They needed long-term programming that would be responsive to their developmental needs.

However, it was not until we began working with teenagers that I had some indication of the the issues that we were facing. As the project progressed I began to realize the depth of the culture that I was immersed in and the presence of structural violence and its manifestations in the lives of the youth. At about the same time I discovered popular theatre. The concept of using theatre to create critical awareness and analyze social problems seemed to be just what the doctor ordered. I studied popular theatre in university classes and attended community performances whenever and wherever I could. I travelled to Toronto to attend Naming the Moment workshops, to Vancouver for Forum Theatre workshops and many other popular theatre or popular education events. Here, I thought, was an important and powerful way to work with inner city youth. I was inspired and challenged by the potential of popular theatre.

As I began to explore the potential of popular theatre in programs with Inner City youth, I began to have concerns about the critical social analysis that was taking place in some popular theatre programs. At first I thought that I was lacking as a popular theatre worker. Should I not be promoting more in-depth critical social analysis in the programs I was facilitating? If the intent of analysis in other popular theatre programs was to bring participants to a state of *conscientization*, a state where they were empowered to take control of their lives and become active participants in creating their own history, was I doing that?

Many of the popular theatre workshops or performances that I attended or read about promoted critical social analysis through short-term or one-shot projects. I began to have doubts. I could not see the benefit of using theatre to show inner city youth the nature of their oppression and then, after a series of workshops, moving on to the next project. Doing that, I reasoned, could destroy their world before they had the tools to construct the beginnings of a new one. I also found that most youth were not interested in direct methods of social analysis. They quickly became bored or offended and did not return the next week. Most of the youth in this project were fighting addictions, suffering from abuse, and lacking a formal education when they began in the program. I did not think that I had the right to expose the oppressive conditions of their reality, propose solutions to the violence of their lives, and then move on to another project. What would I be leaving them with?

We decided that if our program was to have integrity we needed to facilitate a process whereby the youth could take ownership of the program and begin to create their own knowledge, their own forms of theatre to deal with community issues involving social, economic, and political analysis. Once that process began, we reasoned, *conscientization* would also begin. Our responsibility as facilitators of this long-term project was to help create an environment where the project could take place, where youth could identify their own developmental needs as the project progressed. If we were partially responsible for creating the environment then, if the program was to have integrity, we were also responsible for assembling the necessary resources for the youth's development as they were identified.

This journey has led us from offering drama programs for children, to popular theatre program for inner city youth, and then to community performances which focussed on personal and social issues identified by the youth as being important to them and their community. As our work progressed housing and employment were identified as a need and we did our best to respond. The most recent need identified by the youth was education and that need has led to the creation of Inner City High School.

The project has guided me through a period of self-reflection and growth. I reflected on my own youth and the role that theoretical concepts such as structural violence, meritocracy, reproduction, and *conscientization* played in my life. I was introduced to these concepts in my university studies. They allowed me to name forces that I knew from my own experience existed but could not articulate. The forces of structural violence, meritocracy, and reproduction coloured my youth. And like the youth in this study, I tended to blame myself for not living what was portrayed in the media and the dominant culture as the good life.

This study has shown that the forces of reproduction, while difficult to resist, can be overcome. It is my sincere hope that this work will be an inspiration for further research and for the development of university teacher training programs that are sensitive to the needs of youth such as those we have come to know in this project. I hope that this research can be an inspiration for other educators, policy makers, and cultural workers to undertake projects intended to slow the waste of human potential and social resources that goes on day after day in our inner cities and in other parts of our world. The problems of inner city youth are the responsibility of each one of us and are deeply rooted in the inequality of the global system.

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APPENDIX

Silent Cries

Transcribed Videotape, Hub Community Center, University Of Alberta
March 13, 1993

Several minutes of the video are devoted to views of the youth setting up the lights and audio equipment.

Joe Cloutier addresses the audience:

We are from the Inner City drama Association. We use drama or popular theater to work with young people in downtown Edmonton. We have five different programs [that meet in] the same locations year after year. This is the only group that performs regularly. We perform at, well, Thursday, we were at the Edmonton Young Offender Center and in a couple of weeks we'll be doing some conventions. We tour rural Alberta as well. Last month we started a high school: Inner City High.

The play you're about to see is based on the experience of the young actors. They're responsible for the content. It's all based on their experience either directly or indirectly. We meet together for a while and use drama exercises to feel comfortable with each other; to respect each other, and then we begin to tell stories, put them into scenes and work with them. Some what you are about to see is part of people's lives and I would ask that you respect that. Following the performance there'll be a bit of a discussion period. Thank you very much.

Scene goes to black.

Lights come up slowly. Stage is set with a table covered with a cloth and four chairs.

Vocalist takes stage right.

On the streets, I can feel all the pain
I need to get high, or I'll go insane
This is my life, I don't need to retire
Every night my life is on fire.

How can I sleep in this pool of pain?
How can I sleep when I don't know my name?
Can't you see me screaming at the sky?
Can't you hear my silent cries?

Some days I wake up and I close my eyes
Then I open my eyes and I can't help but cry.

Why is this happening? What is happening to me?
I don't deserve this. Can't you see?

I'll show you pieces of love and trust
Why does hope turn to dust?
My whole family has been destroyed.
My whole family is unemployed.
Hey God why can't you see me?
Hey God, has happiness betrayed me?

Hey God if you're there in the skies?
Why can't you hear my silent cries?

I know it's terrible, so I'll just hide;
Life goes on, and I hurt inside.
The cycle of life is like a cage.
Let the heavens tremble and feel my rage.

Silent Cries.
Can't anybody hear me?
Silent Cries
Can't anybody hear me?

Fade to black.

Musical trailer introduces scene.

Scene opens...lights come up.

Lance is at table.

Lance: Hello...Carrie...is anybody here?

Lance sits. Proceeds to snort a line.

Carrie enters stage right.

Carrie: What are you doing?

Lance: Nothing. What?

Carrie: Well, it looks like you're doing something.

Lance: Like what?

Carrie: Like coke.

Lance: I'm not doing that. I told you I quit that already.

Carrie: What is that?

Lance: I don't know. It could be anything. Why are you accusing me of that now?
Lance: steps over to Carrie and grabs her roughly by the upper arms

Carrie: No it just looks like you were doing that.

Lance: Oh yeah. It looks like it so go ahead and accuse me, huh? I told you I quit that, already.

Lance raises his right arm to strike Carrie.

Knock on door.

Lance: You just wait. (pushes Carrie away and points at her)

Lance answers door.

Lance: Hey guys. Come in.

Nazam and Vanessa enter upstage.

Nazam: I've got tickets to the hockey game. The playoffs.

Lance: No way.

Nazam: I do. They're worth fifty bucks each.

Lance: Oh wow. Come in and sit down.

Nazam: You've got to come with me. I can't take Vanessa.

Lance: Well, I'll think about it and get back to you on it.

(Vanessa and Carrie hug)

Nazam: That would be great. It's quiet in here. Where are the kids?

Lance: They should be home from school any minute.

Children enter stage left.

Marilyn: Quit it. Stop it.

Lance: Hey what did I tell you about bugging you sister?

Marilyn: Yeah.

Frank takes a poke at Marilyn.

Lance: (points at Frank) Hey....jeez.

Lance: Marilyn, this is Nazam and Vanessa. Nazam and Vanessa, this is my daughter Marilyn.

Carrie: You forgot our son.

Lance: Yeah. That's Frank.

Nazam: Hi Frank.

Vanessa: Hi Frank, how you doing?

Frank: So it looks like you have company. (Puts his arms around Lance and Carrie). One happy family...company. Ain't this the best family? (Looks at Lance) It looks like you're in a good mood. So since you're in a good mood, it must mean I can hit you up for some money, right dear Dad?

Lance: Sure son. How much do you need?

Frank rubs his hands together.

Frank: I don't know. About fifty bucks. Me and the guys, well, you know...

Lance: (rising from chair)

Frank: Remember keep smiling. Happy family. Joy. Love. Just one big happy family.

Lance: Yeah. Yeah. (reaches into his wallet and takes out money).

Frank: I just love having company.

Lance: There you go son. Bye. (Places hand very firmly on Frank's shoulder). I'll talk to you about this tonight.

Marilyn: laughs.

Frank pushes at Marilyn. Marilyn hits Frank.

Carrie: Be back by midnight.

Frank: Yeah. Bye. (Waves to Vanessa and Nazam). Nice meeting you. (Exits stage left)

Lance: Ah, kids are great. You guys want some coffee?

Nazam: Yeah, sure.

Frank: (to Carrie) Do you want to go make some coffee?

Marilyn: Do you want me to help?

Carrie: No that's all right.

Lance: I'm going to go see if I can help her.

Marilyn sits at table.

Nazam: So Marilyn, what grade are you in?

Marilyn: Grade Eight.

Nazam: Grade Eight? Neat Grade eh?

Marilyn: It's all right, I guess.

Lance: (offstage) What the hell are you trying to prove out here, huh? "You forgot our son Frank." Trying to embarrass me in front of my friend? Who the hell do you think you are?

Carrie: Well you forgot our own son.

Lance: He's not my son. He's your son. You screwed some guy to get him, not me.

Carrie: Well, you've raised him since he was young.

Lance: I don't even like the little bastard. You just wait till those people are gone. You're dead, you got that?

Lance re-enters stage right.

Lance: I just checked and we're all out of coffee.

Vanessa: That's OK. We have an appointment and we've got to be going.

Nazam: Yeah, we got to be going.

Vanessa: (to Carrie) Bye. I'll call you later.

Nazam: (to Lance) Call me about these tickets. They're really good.

Lance: Yeah, I'll get back to you on that. I'll call you some time this week.

Nazam: OK. That would be great.

Lance: Bye. See you guys later.

Marilyn stands behind her mother.

Lance: Marilyn, do you want to go up to your room and listen to music for a bit?

Marilyn: Why?

Lance: Me and your mother got to talk about a few personal things.

Marilyn: I don't feel like going to my room.

Lance: Come on. Do it for old Dad?

Marilyn: OK. (Marilyn exits stage left)

Lance: (Grabs Carrie by the back of the shirt.) Stand up. Do you have any idea how badly you're pissing me off? Huh? Accusing me of doing that shit again. I told you I stopped that.

Carrie: Well, it just looked like you were.

Lance: Oh yeah, it just looked like. Don't you have any respect for me? All's I demand around here is a little respect. Is that too much to ask for? Huh?

Carrie: No...

Lance: Fuck you. (Pushes Carrie away from him and down on the floor and raises his fist to hit her)

Fade to black.

Scene Two opens with Vanessa and Carrie.

Vanessa: Do you really want to learn to dance?

Carrie: We could try. (starts native music)

Vanessa approaches down stage.

Vanessa: All you do is just bend your knees and feel the rhythm of the music and then when you think you've got it, you stand on the balls of your feet. OK?

Carrie: OK.

Vanessa demonstrates. Carries tries to imitate Vanessa's steps.

Vanessa: Carrie, is everything all right?

Carrie: Of course it's all right.

Vanessa: I was just asking.

Carrie: I can't get this. Let's just go and have coffee.

Vanessa: OK.

Fade to black

Scene Three

Scene Three opens at Coffee House. Carrie and Vanessa are at one table stage left and Cecil at another table down stage right.

Waitress 1 to Cecil: Here you are. (gives Cecil the bill).

Cecil: Thanks a lot

Waitress 2 to Vanessa and Carrie: That'll be $2.50 plus tax (throws bill on table)...and a tip.

Carrie:"....and a tip..." yeah.

Vanessa: I have to get going.

Carrie: Yeah. Lance might be home.

Waitress 2: Don't forget to pay.

Vanessa and Carrie exit laughing stage left.

Frank enters stage left.

Waitress One: Do you want a table?

Frank: That's OK.(spots Cecil ..approaches his table) Hey Cecil!

Cecil: Long time no see.

Frank: Yeah its been a while.

Cecil: Yeah....for sure.

Frank: So what have you been up to lately?

Cecil: Not too much. Got my little business going.

Frank: Yeah...yeah. I heard about that. That's why I was looking for you. I wondered if you could help me out?

Cecil: Looks at table.

Frank: Is there a problem or something?

Cecil: What are you into? Smoke or coke?

Frank: Not that crazy stuff man. I'll stick to small time.
Work my way up.

Cecil Yeah. I'm pretty sure I can do something then. I do need a couple of runners.

Frank: That'd be good.

Cecil: I'm pretty sure we could work something out.

Frank: I hope so.

Cecil: One thing...you gotta make sure though. You gotta carry protection (places knife on table) I don't need any of my runners getting rolled over.

Frank: (takes knife....opens blade) I'm sure I could use this. (puts knife in back pocket).

Cecil: That's good. Welcome aboard. Care for some peanuts?

Frank: Sure

Waitress two
to men at other table: Would you care for anything else?

Cop: I'd like a donut please.

Waitress: We don't have donuts. Just coffee.

Cop Two: That's OK. We brought our own. (places bag on table)

Cop One: I'll have a coffee.

Waitress: And you, sir?

Cop Two: Medium coffee.

Waitress: We don't have medium.

Cop Two: Small then.

Cop One notices activity at other table. Nudges his partner. Both rise and approach other table.

Cop One: (pats Cecil on shoulder) Hey Cecil. How's it going? (lifts Cecil from chair)

Cop Two approaches Frank and pulls him from chair

Cop Two: C'mon.

Frank: What'd you want man?

Cop One is patting down Cecil and Cop Two is patting down Frank.

Cecil: I'm clean man.

Frank: Where are you harassing us for?

Cop Two: (takes object from Frank's back pocket) What's this?

Frank: Where did that come from?

Cop One: Looks like a lethal weapon buddy. We're going to take you home. Give you a warning. Next time, we'll be pressing charges (points at Cecil) You watch out. We'll get you next time.

Cecil: In your dreams pal. You got nothing on me.

Fade to Black

Scene Four

Carrie and Lance at table.

Lance Want to play a game of cards?

Carrie Sure

Knock on door

Lance Go get it.

Marilyn enters stage right. I'll get it.

Carrie: It's all right. I'll get it.

Marilyn sits at table.

Two cops bring Frank in.

Frank: Take is easy man.

Carrie: Hello officers.

Cop One: Is this your son?

Carrie Yup.

Cop One: He's been found with a lethal weapon and given a warning. Next time we're going to have to press charges. We found him hanging around with a drug dealer and it wasn't a wise choice so I think you should talk to him.

Carrie OK. Thank you.

Cops release Frank.

Frank: (waving) Thanks for the ride.

Cops exit stage left.

Lance approaches Frank. Marilyn rises. Carrie gets between Lance and Frank.

Carrie: Look at the influence you've had on our kids.

Lance: Like it's my fault huh? My fault he gets brought home by the cops.

Carrie: You influence him with your bad actions and swearing all the time.

Lance: That's bullshit. I don't swear all the time...well.. I'm sure he hangs around with some pretty shitty people for all you know....it's not always my fault.

Marilyn: Yeah...he does.

Frank: Hey, you keep out of this.

Lance: Shut up (points at Frank).

Frank: Doesn't anybody want to hear what I have to say?

Lance and Carrie: (in unison) Shut up!

Lance: I told you its not always my fault. You can't tell me you haven't noticed him coming in the house stoned half the time.

Frank: What are you talking about? I don't smoke drugs.

Marilyn: Liar.

Frank (pointing at Marilyn) You keep outta this.

Marilyn: I've seen him at the arcade with his friends smoking dope.

Lance: What did I tell you? And you're always blaming me....yeah.

Carrie: Well, I thought that you were the one influencing him. Maybe it is his friends.

Lance: Like I'd want to influence this punk. I couldn't give a good influence for this kid anyway.

Frank: You're a bad influence anyway.

Carrie: (to Lance) I'm sorry.

Carrie and Lance hug.

Frank: Ah, smoochie, smoochie.

Lance grabs Frank by sleeve. You want to seal my fifty bucks?

Frank: Hey I was only just joking.

Lance drags Frank from room. Exit stage right.

Fade to black

Scene Five

Vanessa at table in front of phone

Vanessa picks up phone and dials.

Offstage voice: Hello?

Vanessa: Carrie?

Carrie: Vanessa I really don't have time to talk right now.

Vanessa: Well I was just wondering if you wanted to ...

Carrie: OK. When?

Vanessa: .....come over to my house. Is now OK?

Carrie: OK. 20 minutes.

Vanessa: Well do you know if you....(stares at receiver, then hangs up)

Fade to black.

Scene Six

Vanessa and Carrie at Vanessa's house.

Vanessa: Well, if you really want to learn I'll try and teach you.

Carrie: OK. Well, we'll try this once more.

Vanessa: Once more. OK. Now do you remember what I told you?

Carrie: Yeah.

Native dance music starts.

Vanessa shows Carrie dance steps. Carrie starts to emulate Vanessa.

Vanessa: I think you're getting it.

Suddenly Carrie's mood sobers. She stops dancing and walks away. Sits on table. Vanessa puts her arms around her. Carrie puts her head on Vanessa's shoulder and starts to weep quietly. Lights dim.

Vocalist offstage:

I'd cross the ocean for you.
It's something my heart makes me do.

Our first kiss and my head spun
You talk about destiny from the heavens above
Something is special
And I know it's love

Don't leave me
Don't ever let me go
You're the only one
Whose seeds I'll sow

I'd cross the ocean just to get to you
It's something my heart makes me do.

Our first kiss and my head spun
You talk about destiny from the heavens above
Something is special
And I know it's love

You're my number one, we used to have so much fun
You're my number one, we used to have so much fun
My number one.

Lights rise

Vanessa: Carrie, I know there's something wrong. Why don't you just talk to me?

Carrie: Nothing's wrong. I already told you that.

Vanessa: Carrie, I know there's something wrong because I overheard when we were over the other day.

Carrie: You overheard?

Vanessa: I didn't mean to but it was kind of hard not to. Why don't you just talk to me?

Carrie: I'd like to talk to you but I just don't think that it's safe.

Vanessa: What do you mean? It's safe.

Carrie: Not if it gets back to Lance.

Vanessa: It won't get back to Lance, Carrie. I won't tell him if you don't want me to. I won't.

Carrie: Promise you won't tell anyone?

Vanessa: I won't even tell Nazam.

Carrie: Promise?

Vanessa: I promise. You can trust me Carrie.

Carrie: OK. Well.....

Fade to black.

Scene Seven

Cecil on stage. Lance enters stage left.

Lance: Cecil, oh man. I've been looking for you all over the place. I need some more of that stuff man.

Cecil: Looks like you got the shakes there buddy.

Lance: Yeah.

Cecil: Got any cash?

Lance: Not exactly...no. But I could pay you back, for sure.

Cecil: Well, I don't know about that man.

Lance: Look...here take this. (takes necklace from his neck)

Cecil: (examines the necklace) You're sure that you're going to pay me back?

Lance: Sure I just need enough to get me by.

Cecil: I don't know about this man. But hey, you're a good customer, and I appreciate that. (hand slaps Cecil on back)

Cop One and Two enter.

Cop One: Hey Cecil, face the wall.

Cecil: This ain't my day, man.

Cops pat down Cecil and Lance.

Cop One: (takes cocaine from Cecil's pocket) What's this? Looks like coke. You're in violation of your parole.

Cop Two: This guys clean.

Cop One: We're going to put you away for a long time for this buddy.

Cecil: You're a very sick person.

Cops One and Two take out rubber gloves.

Cop One: We have to make sure you're clean so we're going to have to proceed with a body cavity search.

Lance and Cecil: (in unison) No.....!

Fade to black

Scene Eight

Carrie, Frank and Marilyn at table playing cards. Knock on door.

Frank: I'll get it.

Carrie: No, I'll get it.

Cops One and Two enter with Lance.

Cop One: Is this your husband?

Carrie: Yeah.

Cop One: We found him with a drug dealer and we don't think that was a wise choice so we decided to bring him home.

Carrie: Thank you.

Cops exit.

Carrie: What happened?

Lance: What to you mean, what happened? Nothing happened.

Carrie: Then how come they found you hanging around with a drug dealer?

Frank: Like father like son.

Lance: You shut up. I was framed.

Carrie: You were framed.

Lance: It was some other guy. He looked exactly like me.

Carrie: How many people look like you?

Lance: There could be hundred s or thousands. I'm just an ordinary kind of person.

Carrie: Frank, here's twenty dollars. Go out for a while.

Frank: Sure.

Lance: What the hell do you think you're doing giving him money?

Carrie: I didn't want him to see this.

Lance: See what?

Carrie: Us arguing again.

Lance: Oh yeah? You want to see arguing. I'll show you arguing. You want to get rough Huh? Do you?

Marilyn: Dad you're hurting her. Don't.

Carrie: Marilyn, stay out of this.

Lance: Yeah, listen to your mother. So you want to accuse me of doing that again? I told you I quit. Now because of this drug dealer business you think I'm doing it again, don't you? Huh?

Carrie: Well, it sort of fits together.

Marilyn: Dad, you're hurting her.

Lance: Get out of here. Go on (turns and hits Marilyn on side of head. Marilyn falls to floor) Look what you made me do?

Carrie: I didn't make you do that.

Lance: Yes you did. (strikes Carrie. Carrie falls to floor.)

Fade to Black

Scene Nine

Marilyn at table with beer and pills. She is writing note. She stops, pours out handful of pills, opens beer and takes pills, washed down with beer. She starts writing again. reads what she has written.

Marilyn: Dear Diary: I started up drinking again because of my Dad. My Mom and him were arguing. He wanted to hit her. I wanted to stop him from hitting her and he wound up hitting me. I didn't do nothing wrong. All I was trying to do was help Mom. I can't continue on any more. All he cares about is his drugs. I don't know what to do. I can't go to Frank. He's mad at me too. No one seems to care for me any more. So right now I'm taking sleeping pills one at a time. Maybe if I die they will love me again, or at least he'll start treating Mom...anyway, Diary, I gotta go now. I'm starting to get tired. I think I'll take a walk.

Starts native chant.

Stands up and exits.

Fade to Black

Scene Ten.

At hospital. Marilyn is on stretcher. Nurse takes pulse and leaves.

Carrie and Frank and Lance enter and sit by her. She is comatose (or dead?)

Carrie: Look what you've done. Look at all the pain you've caused this family. You not only have to hit me, but you have to do worse stuff and hit our child? I can't see me living every day like this. I can't carry on unless you seek counseling.

Lance: Fuck you then.

Lance exits.

Fade to black.

Scene Eleven

Carrie at home. lance enters and sits.

Carrie: Where did you go?

Lance: For a walk. While I was gone I thought about the things you said at the hospital today.

Carrie: And?

Lance: And I checked into some places for counseling.

Carrie: You did? But will you go?

Lance: Of course. I've caused enough hurt and pain in this family and I don't want to lose the family and I don't want to lose you.

Puts head on Carrie's lap. She strokes his head.

Fade to black.

Scene Twelve

Carrie: doing native dancing.

Fade

Closing Scene

Stage is black except for family slides that are being shown against the black backdrop.

Vocalist in foreground.

Can you see me? Can you help me?
Can you see me? Can you help me?
No one can see me, I'll open their eyes.
If no one can hear, I'll turn their heads this way, my way.

Welcome to the cold truth
Where human rights is my lawyer
I accuse you society, of ignorance
I blame you society for my misfortunes

Out of the silence in the back of my head
Out of the darkness, let it be said,
Out of the silence in the back of my head
Out of the darkness, let it be said

I demand to be heard
I demand to be considered
I demand to be equal
I demand a change
Humanitarian Judgments
Is made
And finds the accused guilty
The sentence is awareness over time

Out of the silence in the back of my head
Out of the darkness, let it be said
Out of the silence in the back of my head
Out of the darkness, let it be said

Fade to black.

Question Period

Man with pony tail next to Joe

Q. I'll start with a compliment. I think it went very well. What you guys portrayed was...well, it came from you guys. I've seen a lot of this stuff and do this kind of work and it's really encouraging when people can make their own images. But also I think what's more important is that you guys try to find ways out. My one question is how do you guys feel after you do something like this?

Carrie: Tired. Every time we've done this, I feel better. Like some people have gone through this and maybe there are some people in the audience that has been through it and just to let them know, they're not the only ones. That there's somebody else out there. It might help them.

Lance: (points to Carrie) What she said.

Q: How long have you guys all been doing this?

Marilyn: Different times. We all joined at different times.

Q: Go down the line.

Cecil: I started off last year or 2 years ago. It seems like a very long time. It doesn't seem so long cause we try to have fun while we're doing it. It seems like the time goes by very quickly. So actually it's been 2 years. To be technical, about a year and a half.

Marilyn: I've been in here for 5 years. I joined a long time ago.

Nazam: I joined a long time ago. Then I as asked to join a special group about a year ago. Then I quit and I joined back about 9 months ago. Like Cecil said, the time really flies. We're just having fun and we're like family. We are family.

Marilyn: Well not always fun.

Carrie: I've been with this group since the beginning of the summer....last summer.

Lance: I've been in a group for five years. I joined another group that Joe was running at Eastwood School and I was with them about 3 years. Then I joined this one about one or 2 years ago.

Vanessa: I was in the same group as Lance, the Eastwood group. Then I found out about this group from Lance so I joined it.

(girl that played the Nurse): It's a complex thing. I was with them (points to Lance and Carrie) then I left and came back and left and came back.

Off screen voice: You were gone for quite a long while.

Nurse: But I'm back.

Frank: I've been in drama for just about 5 years. I started in an after school program with these guys and I was in for a couple of years and then after that Joe asked me if I wanted to joint this drama group and I said sure.

Donna: I was in this drama group for about 5 years and during that time I quit for about 2 years and I just came back.

Marilyn: I'm the only one that hasn't quit.

Cop One: I've been in the drama group for about 2 months.

Cop Two: I've been in the drama group for about 2 months. My counselor introduced me to this group and I think it's cool.

Applause

Bill: I was in the same group these three were in but only for one year and then in December Joe asked me to join and I had nothing else to do so here I am. If you're wondering why I wasn't playing the bass so much, it's because the sound would kick in and kick out. Sorry about that. I tried my best.

Vocalist: I've have been here since sometime last fall I guess. I hung around Inner City and finally found the group.

Someone in audience: Give yourselves a round of applause.

Applause from group.

Q (off screen): What impact do you think this has had on your lives? How does it change how you think about yourselves and how you relate to people?

Lance: I used to be bad news. I was angry and really bad news. And then I joined Inner City and now I'm a better person. I don't do all the bad things I did before.

Q: I was going to ask how you go from having the ideas to having the play. Like you have the ideas, and you get together and then there's what we see as a finished play.

Vanessa: It's just basically from our own experiences and stuff we've seen around us, and then we sit around and we talk and we make up scenes and then we just fit it all together to make a play.

Q: I'm just interested in who are the principals in your group,...like community involvement. What kind of requests...who asks you to perform? What kind of agencies?

Joe: The City of Edmonton. Family and community Support Services and Alberta Social Services. Alberta Social Services funded the development of this production and private funding in the City, like the Clifford E. Lee Foundation. The Variety Club bought us a van. We could go on and on, but there are many organizations that have been very supportive.

Q: To be part of the Inner City group, are there certain rules that you have to follow to be part of the group?

Marilyn: Basically what we ask is that we respect each other.

Lance: You can't murder the group members, cause we had a lot of trouble with that last year.

(laughter)

...just kidding.

Q: Where do you get the cultural inspiration from? Given that there are two parts that I see: One, the problem and the other the spiritual energization or influence that helps you see your way through it. Where does that come from or is that too hard a question?

Vocalist: If I've got your question right, I think you mean like with the native and the spiritual idea and like with the streets, is that what you mean?

Q: Yeah like I saw like a lot of pow wows and stuff happening and that seemed to be important but then there's the problem coming in. Where does this come in?

Cecil: What it is is like the spirituality of the pow wow that's like all broken down at first because the family seems to be all broken up and as the family starts to come together and start acting as one respecting each others things and what not, then what they see as wrong is inside them. They seem to have a lot of frustration and anger and as that is worked out, the spirit seems to flow from the body and come out. I don't know it all seems to come together.

Q: Is it fair to say then that the pow wow is a way to sort out your problems?

Cecil; Yeah. You hear about focusing your energies.

Q: I noticed that some of you said you heard about the program from a counselor and I wondered if most of you did the same thing. Did you hears about it through school projects....?

Marilyn: There's a whole bunch of organizations that help. There's Boyle Street Group, Eastwood, Alex Taylor, Ben Calf, a whole bunch of groups and at the end of school like summer holidays, you can't do that at schools anymore. If they want to do it year round, they can join this group. We're the Boyle Street group.

Q: So what do you guys think...what to you think are the causes that makes life look like that. Like the things you told the story about?

Lance What makes life like that?

Q: Yeah.

Marilyn: Mainly the drugs and alcohol.

Cecil: And probably the feeling of being trapped.

Marilyn: It's mostly where there's drugs and alcohol involved. It splits the family.

Q: Why the drugs and alcohol?

Frank: People use it as an excuse to escape. Like they're having problems, they pick up the bottle right away. They won't think about anything.

Marilyn: And then they're like a totally different person.

Frank: And then they think the pain is gone. If they drink or take some drugs. but then it just builds up more and more and then it will just all come out. Does that answer your question?

Q: What to you think the father's pain was?

Lance: It was coke addiction.

Marilyn: Sometimes it's not only the pain. A person can be doing drugs and they think it's just occasionally and they don't know they're addicted. They don't realize. They say "Oh, I can stop tomorrow" They keep on doing it.

Lance: It means they're in denial.

Q: Because I'm a native person, I picked up on the dancing and stuff. Is there ways....like how do you find your ways back there. Like how do you find your way back to dancing, sweetgrass, is that a question that enters into where you're at right now?

Panel: Could you say that again?

Q: Like how do you find you way back to the spirituality or is there a way back?
Nurse: My mom's like into the traditional ways. So if I decide to do the traditional way or the Catholic way I go now. Like I couldn't go back hat way.

Q: So that's inside the home. What about if it's not inside the home?

Marilyn: I think they have a place where you can go and ask and they'll teach you about the Creator if you don't know. I remember hearing about this place here that teaches people Cree.

Carrie: I was away from Native dancing for about 4 years. Like I danced when I was young till I was seven, and then I moved with my Dad and he's not into that and then I moved back with my Mom and I never seen him for 8 years and then I went back. And my older brother's is really into the spiritual things, like dancing, and that and I had a lot of problems when I first came back and he was just talking to me and stuff and I think through the whole 8 years I always felt my native culture in me but I didn't express it. And then I felt so much better when I came back because I had it inside of me and I just let it out. And I started talking to my brother. And I feel so much more comfortable about dancing and stuff. When I dance I feel relieved.

End of question period.

End of tape.